FOUR BELLS

RALPH D. PAINE

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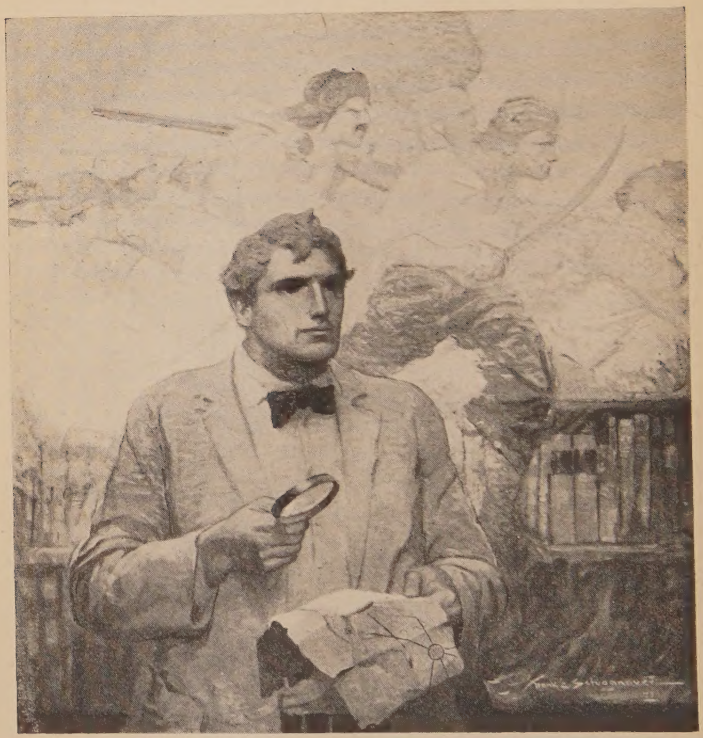

"WHERE IS THIS COCOS ISLAND?"

FOUR BELLS

A Tale of the Caribbean

BY

RALPH D. PAINE

AUTHOR OF
COMRADES OF THE ROLLING OCEAN,
FIRST DOWN, KENTUCKY!, ETC.

FRONTISPIECE BY
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FOUR BELLS

CHAPTER I

THE VOICE OF THE SPANISH MAIN

THE romance of the sea! Damned rubbish, he called it. The trade of seafaring was one way to earn a living. This was about all you could say for it. He had been lured into the merchant service as the aftermath of an enlistment in the Naval Reserve for the duration of the war. There was a great hurrah, as you will recall, over the mighty fleet of new cargo ships which were to restore the Stars and Stripes to blue water — Columbia's return to the ocean, and all that — a splendid revival of the days of Yankee ships and sailors of long ago — a career for ambitious, adventurous American youth.

This was true enough until the bubble broke. The painful malady of deflation suddenly afflicted the world's commerce. Much of Columbia's mighty fleet rusted at its moorings. Ambitious American youth walked the streets in quest of jobs afloat or relinquished the sea to the Briton and the Scandinavian. It could not be said that the nation was deeply stirred by this calamity. In a manner of speaking, it had long since turned its back to the coast and could not be persuaded to face about.

This Richard Cary was one of the young men who had not been cast high and dry by the ebb tide of maritime affairs. No auspicious slant of fortune favored him. He earned what came to him in the way of employment and

promotion. All he knew was the hard schooling of North Atlantic voyages in bull-nosed brutes of war-built freighters that would neither steam nor steer.

During the period of booming prosperity, the supply of competent officers fell far short of the demand. Any ancient mariner with a master's license and fairly sound legs could get a ship. Foreign skippers were given "red ink tickets" and shoved aboard big American steamers.

The iron discipline and austere traditions of the sea were jeered at by motley crews, alien and native-born, who had easier work and better treatment than sailormen had ever known. Mutiny ceased to be sensational. Noisy Slavs preached Bolshevism in the forecastle. Every dirty loafer had a grievance. Ships limped into port with drunken stokers who refused to ply shovel and slice-bar unless they happened to feel like it. Wise gentlemen ashore diagnosed it as the poison of social unrest.

Amid these turbulent conditions, such an officer as Richard Cary was worth his weight in gold. For one thing, the Navy had hammered into his soul certain ideas which he declined to regard as obsolete. These pertained to order, fidelity, and obedience as essential to the conduct of a ship. He was a young man unvexed by complex emotions. Life consisted in doing the day's work well, and the Lord help the subordinate who held opinions to the contrary.

It was a doctrine which had vouchsafed its own rewards. At twenty-five years of age he was chief officer of a ten-thousand-ton steamer of the Shipping Board fleet. There was something more to this rapid advancement than the old-fashioned virtues referred to. A natural aptitude for the sea was a large factor. Linked with this was a strong serenity of temper that few besetments could ruffle. Chief

Officer Richard Cary moved on his appointed way with a certain ponderous momentum of mind and body.

He was sprung from that undiluted pioneer stock which is still to be found in the rural New England that is remote from the wash of later immigration. It was the English strain, fair-haired and blue of eye, that throws back to the Saxon blood. There had been men of rare height and bulk among his ancestors. This was his goodly inheritance, that his head should brush the ceiling beams of his cabin on shipboard and his shoulders fill the width of the doorway.

Mutinous or sulky sailors ceased to bluster about their rights when this imperturbable young man laid hands on them. This was not often necessary. What he called moral suasion was enough to quell a very pretty riot. He had this uncommon gift of leadership, of mastering men and circumstances, when he was compelled to display it.

There was lacking, however, the driving power of ambition, the keen-edged ardor that cuts its way through obstacles to reach a destined goal. This large placidity of outlook betokened a dormant imagination, a sort of spiritual inertia. There was no riddle of existence, so far as he was concerned. The romance and mystery of the sea? Silly yarns written by lubbers for landsmen to read! They ought to jam across the Western Ocean in the dead of winter with a doddering old fool of a skipper on the bridge and a crew of rotten scoundrels who deserved to be hung.

While enthusiastic crusaders were proclaiming the glorious resurgence of the American merchant marine, surplus tonnage began to pile up in every port. Richard Cary's huge scow of a freighter could find no cargo and was condemned to idleness with a melancholy squadron of her sister craft. The chief officer decided to look around a bit before seeking another berth. One or two offers came from

shipping men who knew him by reputation. Already he stood out from the crowd. Waterfront gossip had passed along various tales of the reign of law and order upon the decks which big Dick Cary trod. He was no cursing, bullying bucko mate, mind you. Six and a half feet of soothing influence is a fairer phrase.

Home he went to the New Hampshire farm for a respite from the hard toil of the sea. In February it was, and the bleak hills wore their deep blankets of snow. His younger brother drove him in a pung to the white house snuggled close to the ground which had sheltered six generations of Carys. It made his back ache merely to look at the miles of stone wall which, as a clumsy young giant, he had helped to keep in repair.

"I guess going to sea is easier than this," said brother Bill. "You seem to have done mighty well for yourself, I'll tell the world. Any chance for me?"

"Not a chance," replied the deep, leisurely accents of brother Dick. "Seafaring is all shot to pieces. You stand by your mother and look after the farm till you are ready to go to the agricultural college. I'll pay for it."

"Plenty of excitin' stories to tell us, I s'pose. Your picture was in the papers, Dick, after your ship came into New York with four men in irons. It said you subdued 'em. What with, I want to know."

"I read poetry to 'em, Bill, and distributed bouquets of cut flowers. They seemed grateful. So mother is as spry as ever and working her head off because she likes it."

"Yep, she sure does make me snap out, Dick. And I bet she takes no back talk from you."

"I'm scared already," grinned the herculean mariner. "Watch her start a rough house if I track in any snow."

He strode up the path to the granite doorstep and

whisked up the wiry little woman who wore a best black gown and a white apron. Into the house he carried this trifling burden and set her down in a rush-bottomed chair by the fireplace.

"Bless me, Richard," she cried, "that's a trick you learned from your father that's dead and gone! I used to tell him it was dreadful undignified. Of course he didn't have your heft, but there was no ruggeder man in the village. Do you realize it's been a whole year since you came home last?"

"Couldn't break away, mother. A mate has to drive like a nigger when a ship is in port. Has Bill been taking good care of you? Any complaints and I'll wallop the kid."

"William is a quick and willing boy," was the maternal verdict — "not so easy and good-natured as you — more inclined to be fretty when things go wrong."

"You always called me lazy," laughed the elder son, "and a nuisance under foot."

"I dunno as I was far wrong, Richard," was the severe rejoinder, "but we all have our failings. You have been a generous boy to your widowed mother. My land, you must have sent me 'most all your pay. I've been as careful as I could with it, and the account in the savings bank makes me feel real rich. Of course it belongs to you."

"Forget it," Richard growled amiably, waving a careless hand of imposing dimensions. "I'll eat you out of house and home in the next fortnight. What about a whole pie right now?"

"Too much pie is bad for you between meals," she firmly announced. "I'll go cut you a reasonable piece. And don't you let me hear you make a fuss about it."

"Not me," he sighed. "I know better."

Contentedly he submitted to this fond tyranny. After

all, home was the only place where folks cared whether a man lived or died. He was in every respect so unlike this high-strung, unflagging wisp of a mother of his that the contrast amused him. She was a Chichester and ran true to type. Most of the women wore themselves out in middle age. Her energy burned like a flame. Idleness was a sin.

In her turn she was perplexed by this strapping son of hers. He was rated as a highly successful young man, and yet, in her opinion, he lacked both zeal and industry — cardinal tenets of her New England creed. Sprawled upon the cushioned settle, he would drowsily stare at the fire for hours on end. He read very little and was not a loquacious person. An excellent listener, however, his mother's eager chatter about little things broke against his massive composure like ripples upon a rock.

Now and then, in oddly silent moments, she studied him intently. Rugged, like his father, but there resemblance strangely halted. Matthew Cary's frame had been gaunt, his features harsh and shrewd with the enduring imprint of the Puritan tradition. Richard, the son, might have belonged to another race of men. The fair skin, the ruddy cheek roughened by strong winds and salt spray, the hair like minted gold, were unfamiliar among the recent generations of Carys and Chichesters.

Handsome as a picture and as big as all outdoors, reflected the canny mother with a thrill of pride, but she actually felt like boxing his ears to wake him up. There was no soft streak in him, no weak fiber. This much she knew. His record at sea confirmed it. To call him hulking was absurd. There was courage in the level, tranquil gaze, and resolution was conveyed by the firm lips that smiled so readily.

"What in the world do you think about when you sit

there like a bump on a log?" impatiently exclaimed the mother. "Is it a girl? William has suffered from those moon-struck spells now and then, but at his age it's no more serious than chicken-pox."

"There's never been a girl that I thought of very long," dutifully answered Richard, his pipe between his teeth. "I'm not so anxious to meet the right one. Going to sea is poor stuff for a married man. They mean well enough, but I have seen too many lonely skippers and mates raising hell ashore."

"Don't you swear in this house, Richard. And I advise you to beware of low company. Sailors who have been properly brought up are true to their sweethearts and wives, like all decent folks."

"Yes'm," murmured her worldly young giant. "If Bill ground the axe, as I told him to, I guess I'll go and cut two or three cords of that pine growth. I need to limber up."

"Then please stop at the gate and get the mail, Richard. It must be in the box by this time. And don't you let that axe slip and cut your foot. I know you're a wonderful chopper, just like your father, but I always fret —"

"Aye, mother. You never saw a man so careful of his own skin. At sea, now, I run no risks at all."

"Richard, you are joking. Please don't cross the pond. The ice is melted thin and rotten with this February thaw. You might fall in and catch your death o' cold."

Chief Officer Cary, veteran of the North Atlantic trade, promised to avoid getting wet in the pond. Axe on his shoulder, he passed through the lane to the highway. In the box nailed to a gatepost he found a letter from a seafaring friend in New York. It appeared to interest him. After a hasty glance, he read it with more care. What it said was this:

My dear Dick:

I don't know what your plans are. If you have a job already cinched you are a lucky stiff. You can't throw a brick in this port without hitting an idle shipmaster. So far I haven't been chucked on the beach. The port captain of the Union Fruit Company is an old friend of mine. I told him about you yesterday. He needs a second officer in a passenger boat, the *Tarragona*, on the run to Kingston, Cartagena, and so on. Fine people to work for. None better. You may turn up your nose at the notion of going second mate, but they can't keep a good man down. The *Tarragona* sails next Wednesday. Wire me if you care to run down and size it up. Better come early and avoid the rush. The Spanish Main ahoy!

Faithfully yours

L. J. P.

Richard Cary let the axe rest against the gate while he pondered in his deliberate fashion. At first it had annoyed him to think of stepping down a peg. He had been looking forward to command in two or three years more. But times were hard and the tenure of employment in cargo steamers uncertain. He might be shifting about, from one company to another, and if freight rates dropped much lower he would be likely to join the luckless mob of stranded officers.

There was a prospect of advancement in the Union Fruit Company's service. A second mate's pay would meet his modest needs, with a surplus to send home. An easier life, decent men to handle, a smart, efficient ship — these were arguments not to be tossed aside. So much for the practical aspect of it. This was overshadowed, however, by the desire to make the southern run. It was more like an urgent impulse. Until now, voyaging in the tropic zones had never appealed to him. He had a Western Ocean sailor's pride in fighting bitter gales and pounding seas.

Rather puzzled by his quick surrender to this summons,

he turned back to the house and forgot to pick up the axe. He walked briskly, chin up, a man astir and efficient. Queer how a few lines of that letter had thrilled his matter-of-fact mind! He liked the sound of Cartagena and the Spanish Main. Where the devil was Cartagena? He knew there was a port of that name on the coast of Spain. This other one was somewhere in the Caribbean, down Colombia way, as he vaguely recalled.

Into the kitchen swung Richard Cary and demanded to know where the atlas was kept. His mother wiped the flour from her hands and exclaimed:

"First time I ever saw you in a hurry about anything except your meals. What under the sun ails you?"

"Outward bound — the night train for New York. I want to find out where I go from there." His mellow voice rang through the low-studded rooms. His mother was dismayed. The sea had called her towering son and he was a different being. Almost timidly she said:

"But you expected to make a longer visit, Richard. Why, you aren't really rested up. You sat around here — "

"And enjoyed every minute of it," he broke in, with a boyish laugh. "Now I'm going south in a banana boat, where the flying fishes play. Do I have to pull this house down to break out the atlas?"

"Mercy sakes, no! It's under the Bible on the parlor table where it has set for years. There's yellow fever and snakes down there, and how are you off for summer underwear?"

With his chin in his hand he pored over the map of the Caribbean and the sailing tracks across that storied sea. Jamaica and the Isthmus of Panama! Thence his finger moved along the coast to Cartagena and Santa Marta and La Guayra. His kindled fancy played around the words.

They were like haunting melody. It was an emotion curiously novel. To find anything like it, he had to hark back to the fairy tales of childhood.

The feeling passed. His mother's anxious accents recalled him to himself.

"But is it necessary, Richard, for you to rush off and take a second officer's position? Why don't you wait for something better? It's not a mite like you to fly off at a tangent like this. Common sense was always your strongest point."

"This is just the berth I want, I tell you," said he. "It sounds new and interesting. Now if you will help me get my dunnage together — clean clothes and so on — where's Bill?"

"Gone to the village on an errand, Richard," was the meek answer. "He will be back in plenty of time to drive you to the train. Well, I've seen you wake up for once. Is this the way you boss men around on a ship?"

"For Heaven's sake, I didn't mean to sound rough, mother dear. I can move lively when something has to be done. And I don't want to lose the chance of sailing in this *Tarragona*."

The details of departure arranged, he resumed his wonted humor, care-free and easy. His mother wept a little when the sound of sleigh-bells heralded the approach of William in the pung. There had been other partings like this, however, and she briskly waved a handkerchief from a window as he rode away. She still had her qualms about those outlandish ports, but he had solemnly sworn to shake the scorpions out of his shoes before putting them on, and this gave her some small comfort.

Young William fired a volley of questions on the road to the station, but his big brother had little to say. The spell

of the Caribbean had faded. It was merely another job in a different ship. This lazy reticence irritated William who burst out:

"Sometimes you act as if you were dead from the neck up, Dick. You go to sleep in your tracks like a regular dumb-bell. Where's your pep and punch if you're such a blamed good officer? I'm entitled to talk plain, seeing as it's all in the family. Don't you ever get mad?"

"Quite peevish at times, Bill. There was a cabin steward last voyage who brought me cold water to shave with, two days running. I hated to do it, but I had to beat him to death with a hairbrush and throw his body overboard. He left a wife and seven children in Sweden and begged piteously for his life. Discipline, Bill! You have simply got to enforce it."

William snorted with disgust. He was off this big lump of a brother, he said to himself, who treated him like a silly kid. The train was late, and while they waited at the station a stray dog wandered along the platform. It was no vagrant cur, but a handsome collie which had somehow lost its master and was earnestly trying to find him. The plight was enough to inspire sympathy in the heart of any man that loved a good dog.

"Take him home and keep him until you can 'phone around and stick up a notice in the post-office, Bill," said Richard Cary.

Before William could catch the collie, the express train came thundering down. One of the loungers on the platform emitted a loud guffaw and tossed a bit of stick between the rails of the track. The collie rushed to retrieve it. Richard Cary cursed the man and yelled at the dog which bravely snatched the stick and fled to safety, escaping destruction by no more than the length of its plumed

tail. It stood quivering in every nerve, nuzzling Richard's hand.

"Put my bags aboard, Bill," said the mariner. "I have a little business to attend to. It will take only a minute."

William concluded to hover within sight and sound. His brother's face was white as he moved closer to the man who had attempted to slay a dog in wanton sport. The offender was heavily built, with a truculent air, a stranger to the village. His coarse visage reflected alarm, but before he could fight or retreat his right arm was caught and twisted back in a grip that made him scream with pain.

A bone snapped. It would be some time before he could throw sticks with that right arm. Beside himself with rage and anguish, he bellowed foul abuse.

"Shut your dirty mouth," commanded Richard Cary. "You are getting off easy."

The tortured blackguard was given time to utter one more obscene insult. An open palm smote his face. It was a buffet so tremendous that the victim was fairly lifted from his feet. He pitched into the snow at the edge of the platform and lay huddled without motion.

"Good God-amighty, Dick, you busted that guy's neck," gasped William as he tugged at his brother's sleeve. "And all you did was slap him. If you want to hop this train, you'd better hustle."

"Broke his neck? No such luck," growled Richard. "If he wants to see me again, tell him to wait till I come back. All right, Bill. Let's go."

He stooped to pat the head of the affectionate collie and ran to swing on board of the moving train. William had a farewell glimpse of his face at the window. Again it was ruddy and good-humored. The smile was a little wistful, almost like that of a boy leaving home for the first time.

The younger brother stood staring after the train. His thoughts were confused. Presently he said to himself:

"Looks to me like there is a good deal for us to learn about Dick. You don't catch *me* sassin' him again. I certainly did run an awful risk when I called him a dumb-bell. Come on, pup. He told me to lug you home and I feel darn particular about obeyin' orders."

CHAPTER II

THE SEA DOGS OF DEVON

THE *Tarragona*, of the Union Fruit Company's fleet, was steaming to the southward, away from harsh winds and ice-fettered harbors. It was sheer magic, this sea change that brought the sweet airs of the tropics to caress the white ship when she was no more than three days out from Sandy Hook. Passengers whose only business was to seek amusement loafed on the immaculate decks or besought the nimble bartender to mix one more round of planter's punches. The three-mile limit was another discomfort which had been left far astern.

To the second officer, Richard Cary, it was like a yachting cruise. He was adjusting himself to this unfamiliar kind of sailoring. In a uniform of snowy duck he stood his watches on the bridge or occupied himself with the tasks of keeping the ship as smart and clean as eternal vigilance could make her. It resembled dining in a gayly crowded hotel to take his seat at one of the small tables in the saloon and listen, with an ingenuous interest, to the chatter of these voyagers who had embarked for an idle holiday on the blue Caribbean. Among them were girls, adept at flirtation and not at all coy, who regarded this big, fair-haired second officer with glances frankly admiring. He was by all odds the most intriguing young man aboard the *Tarragona*.

His lazy indifference was provoking. When asked a question on deck he replied with a boyish smile and a courteous word or two, but could not be persuaded to linger. In his own opinion he was not hired to entertain the

passengers. Leave that nonsense to the skipper. He had all the time in the world and seemed to enjoy making a favorite of himself.

Captain Jordan Sterry was a man past fifty years old, but reluctant to admit it. A competent seaman of long service in the company's employ, he had a sociable disposition and could tell a good story. Sturdy and erect, his grayish hair and mustache close-cropped, he looked the part of the veteran shipmaster. He had one weakness, not unknown among men of his years. He preferred the society of women very much younger than himself. This expressed itself in a manner gallantly attentive to the bored young person who could find nobody else on board to play with, or to the audacious flapper who liked them well seasoned by experience and felt immensely flattered at attracting the notice of the spruce master of the *Tarragona*.

His attitude was nicely paternal. He deluded himself into believing that onlookers accepted it as such. In this respect Captain Jordan Sterry was not unique.

Richard Cary had an observant eye and a sense of humor. When he appeared sluggish, it was merely the sensible avoidance of waste motion of mind and body. He read the philandering skipper through and through and felt a healthy contempt for the soft streak in him, harmless enough, perhaps, but proof that there is no fool like an old fool. The man had been young once. Presumably he had had his fling. Why try to clutch at something that was gone, that had vanished as utterly as the froth of a wave? It was more than absurd. To Richard Cary, secure in the splendid twenties, unable to imagine himself as ever growing old, the skipper's rebellion against the inevitable was almost grotesque.

Professionally no flaws could be found in Captain

Sterry's conduct. He ruled his ship with a firm hand, dealt justly with his officers, and was quick to note inefficiency. In all ways the *Tarragona* was a crack ship. It was to Richard Cary's credit that the captain already approved of him. In fact, he was as cordial as the difference in rank permitted.

The chief officer was a sun-dried, silent down-easter who had found it slow climbing the ladder of promotion. He was always hoping for a command, yet somehow missing it. Dependable, incredibly industrious, he lacked the spark of initiative, the essential quality of leadership. Disappointment had soured him. He nursed his grievances and wished he were fitted for a decent job ashore.

After trying in vain to break through his crust, Richard Cary sought companionship elsewhere. He found it in the chief engineer, an extraordinary Englishman named McClement whose cabin was filled with books: history, philosophy, poetry; fiction translated from the French and Russian. There he sat and read by the hour, shirt stripped off, electric fan purring, a cold bottle of beer at his elbow. Half a dozen assistant engineers stood their watches down where the oil burners roared in the furnaces and the huge piston rods whirled the gleaming crank shafts. If anything went wrong, the chief engineer appeared swiftly, clad in disreputable overalls, and his speech was rugged Anglo-Saxon, of a quality requiring expurgation.

Now and then he strolled on deck of an evening, a lean, abstracted figure in spotless white clothes, hands clasped behind him, eyeing the capers of frivolous humankind with a certain cynical tolerance. They were as God had made them, but it was a bungled job. He ate most of his meals in his room, a book propped behind the tray. In this manner he evaded the affliction of mingling with tired busi-

ness men and vivacious ladies eager to visit the engine room.

Richard Cary drifted into this McClement's quarters by invitation, found a chair strong enough to hold him, and filled a blackened pipe from a jar on the desk. As usual he had not a great deal to say, but was amiability itself. He was content to sit and smoke and speak when spoken to. This pleased his host who read aloud choice bits of things and made pungent comments. The visitor borrowed a book and came again. They got on famously together because in temperament they were so curiously unlike.

On a clear day the ship sighted the lofty mountain range of Jamaica and steered to make her landfall for the harbor of Kingston. She drew near to the coast in the late afternoon. The breeze brought the heavy scents of the tropical verdure, of lush mountain vales, and the wet jungle. Richard Cary was on watch. Instead of standing at the bridge railing, with his calm and solid composure, he walked to and fro in a mood oddly restless. Intently he stared at the lofty slopes all clothed in living green, the tiny waterfalls bedecking them like flashes of silver lace.

He snuffed the air, so very different from the sea winds. The tropic island of Jamaica was strange to him, and yet it seemed vaguely, elusively familiar, as though he had beheld it while asleep and dreaming. The chief officer relieved him, but he lingered on the boat deck to see the black pilot come aboard from a dugout canoe. The steamer forged ahead again and passed into the harbor. The mountains loomed beyond the huddled roofs of Kingston. On the starboard side was a low, sandy point upon which were the trim, red-tiled bungalows of the quarantine station. The *Tarragona* paused again, to wait for the British health officer.

McClement, the chief engineer, climbed to the boat deck and said, as he joined Richard Cary:

"Port Royal yonder! No more than a sandbank now. The old town was sunk by an earthquake long ago. If you poke about in a small boat, they say you can see the stone walls of the houses down under the clear water. It was a famous resort of pirates and such gentry in the roaring days of the Spanish Main. Rum and loot, women and sin! All that made life worth living."

"Port Royal?" exclaimed Cary. "I'm sure I have heard something about Port Royal. All gone, eh, Mac? Scuppered for their crimes. Served 'em right. A bad lot."

"Very rotten, Dick, but they had certain virtues which the modern buccaneers of industry lack. We have two or three of these aboard. They never risked their skins to bag *their* plunder."

Second Officer Cary muttered something and walked to the edge of the deck to peer down into the bright green water as if expecting to see the flickering phantoms of the wild sea-rovers of the lost Port Royal. His blue eyes were bright with an ardent interest. McClement remarked, with a quizzical grin:

"I haven't seen you really awake before now. What touched you off? Pirate yarns you read when you were a kid?"

"Perhaps so, Mac. I had this feeling once before. It was when I got word from a pal in New York, telling me about this job, that it was on the run to Cartagena. What is Cartagena like?"

"Wait and see it, my boy. Cartagena is a vision of vanished adventures, a gorgeous old Spanish treasure town preserved, by a sort of miracle, through three hundred years. Romance, color, tradition? It makes the days of the tall galleons and the bold sea dogs live again."

"Tell me more about it," demanded Richard Cary. His voice rolled out in a deep and masterful note.

"Come down to my room after the ship docks and I'll give you some books to read, Kingsley's 'Westward Ho,' Hakluyt's 'Voyages,' and Captain Burney's 'History of the Buccaneers of America.'"

Some small sound in the engine room far below them diverted McClement's attention. His perception of such things was uncannily acute. He vanished instantly down the nearest stairway. Richard Cary also found work to do. This broke the spell of his day-dreaming. It did not recur to him during the *Tarragona*'s brief stay at Kingston. In the evening he was on duty at the cargo hatches while the passengers swarmed ashore to find entertainment at the excessively modern and luxurious hotel.

He had leisure to saunter a little way from the wharf, but felt no desire to explore Kingston. It was quite commonplace, the streets noisy with electric cars and automobiles, the brick and wooden buildings as cheap and unlovely as those of any American town. Several charming young passengers failed to persuade him to join a party at the hotel where an orchestra was jazzing it, and he also declined, with due caution, the hospitality of thirsty voyagers who were making a night of it.

Returning to the ship, he went to his room at midnight and picked up the chief engineer's books instead of turning in. Presently he found himself fascinated. For the sake of comfort he shifted into pajamas and lay stretched in the bunk. The ship's bell tolled one half-hour after another and he was still reading. These printed pages were a key that unlocked the gates of enchantment. Now and then he lost himself in absorbed reverie.

These chronicles of hazards and escapes and hard fight-

ing in the waters that washed the Spanish Main had been derived from documents, from the robust memoirs of men whose bones had crumbled in a century now dim and dead. The rich ports whose walls they had stormed with a bravado that defied all odds were no more than fragments of ruined masonry submerged in the jungle growth, Nombre de Dios, Porto Bello, and old Panama, names that still reëcho like the brazen blare of trumpets.

All gone save Cartagena, reflected Richard Cary. Cartagena still basking by the sea to recall that day when Francis Drake and his Devon lads had stormed it with the naked sword.

At length this brawny second mate of the *Tarragona* laid the books aside. Dawn was brightening the windows of his room. He thrust his bare feet into straw slippers and went on deck to loaf in the fresh morning air. His head was buzzing. He felt fatigued, although as a mariner he was hardened to wakeful nights.

In fancy he had been sailing, fighting, and carousing with those ferocious freebooters of the Caribbean. They seemed as real to him as the plodding, slow-spoken farmers of the New Hampshire soil on which he had been raised. Those clumsy, high-pooped ships with the bellying sails and gaudy pennants were as clearly etched in his mind as the stone walls, the square white houses, and the dark woodlands of his native countryside.

Confound the chief engineer's books, he said to himself. They had turned his brain all topsy-turvy.

These impressions slowly faded until the *Tarragona* had sailed from Kingston and was steaming across that wide waste of sea that rolls between Jamaica and the Spanish Main. Strong winds were almost always blowing there, whistling through a ship's stays, whipping the blue surface

into foaming surges, with clear skies and hot sunshine. The *Tarragona* reeled to the swing of these restless seas, and the spray pelted her decks in sparkling showers. The passengers disliked it. Some of them uttered low moans and retired to their rooms. There were vacant chairs in the dining-saloon, regrets at having left the dry land of home, no matter how dry it was.

Richard Cary enjoyed it. He was amazed that he had ever regarded going to sea as drudgery. This part of the voyage appealed to him with a peculiar zest. For the first time he loved the ocean. This boisterous wind that blew beneath a hard bright sky, a cool tang to it that tempered the tropic heat — he drew it deep into his lungs, standing with arms folded across his mighty chest.

The astute chief engineer found something to interest him in the behavior of his herculean young shipmate. They were walking the deck together when McClement said, with his dry chuckle:

"Until we sighted Jamaica, Dick, you were majestic and quiet, like the everlasting hills. I welcomed you as a benign influence in a world of guff and jazz and nervous twitters. Now you fairly talk my head off. It doesn't bore me, mind you, but I find myself perplexed to account for this flow of language. Were you bottled up all those years, and has the cork just blown out?"

"Something like that, Mac," rather sheepishly admitted Richard Cary. "I can't seem to help talking to you about the Spanish Main and the hard-boiled lads that put it on the map. You know all that stuff by heart, and I fairly eat it up."

"Aye, Dick, you lick your chops over it. You have read every bally book I could dig up. It is like a craving for strong drink."

Cary did not appear to be listening. The wind was blowing against his cheek. The deck was unsteady beneath his feet. Against the ship's side the crested waves crashed and broke.

"Can't you see them, Mac?" was his resonant exclamation. "Lubberly little vessels, as round as an apple, leaking like baskets, rotten with fever — wallowing off to leeward when the wind drew ahead? It was this same wind that blew them across this stretch of sea to the Isthmus of Darien and Cartagena, that made it possible for them to fetch the mainland. They had it on the beam, there and back. It served the Spanish galleons as well as the Englishmen that hunted them. Why, Mac, old man, the *feel* of this wind, now don't laugh at me, is enough to tell me more stories than I found in all your musty old books."

The chief engineer halted in his tracks. With a keener scrutiny than usual he studied the candid, engaging features of Richard Cary, the fearless vision, the resolute chin, the ruddy color, and the thatch of yellow hair. Cary was conscious of this deliberate appraisal. He flushed under it. McClement took another turn along the deck before halting to ask a question:

"Do you resemble the rest of the family, Dick?"

"Absolutely not. My dad used to say I was a throwback, and a long throw at that."

"Precisely. That is what I am driving at. New England rural stock, you told me. English on both sides, I presume. Where did your forbears come from?"

"Devonshire, all of them," answered Cary. "My mother's folks came over from Plymouth a couple of hundred years ago and settled near where they live now. My father's ancestors came later, just before the Revolution.

They hailed from a little village near Bideford, so I used to hear him say."

"From Devon?" exclaimed McClement, who did not appear greatly surprised. "The Carys of Devon! And your mother was —"

"A Chichester," said Richard.

"Carys and Chichesters, of course, Dick. And you are the living image of Amyas Leigh in 'Westward Ho'! He must have been about your build and bulk. The kind of lad they bred in Devon when the world was young!"

"Carys and Chichesters sailed with Drake and Hawkins," broke in Richard, "in these same seas, and they fought the Spanish Armada along with Walter Raleigh and Martin Frobisher. I found the names in one of your books."

"Aye, they did all of that and more too," agreed the chief engineer. "I am too hard-headed to take stock in any fantastic theory of buried memories and such tosh as that. I'll have to admit, though, that you are a bit startling, Dick. It's out of the question, of course, that certain impressions and associations could have been handed down through your race, to come to life in you."

Inherited memories of the Spanish Main? Such a notion had not occurred to Richard Cary. Fantastic enough, but his quickened imagination laid hold of it.

"There must have been a Cary in one of the expeditions against Cartagena, don't you think, Mac?"

"My word, yes. You can bet your last dollar on that. Those stout Devon lads were all over the shop, wherever there was a chance to singe the beard of the king of Spain."

"Then wouldn't that account for the queer feeling that I have been in these waters before? Why, the idea of sailing for Cartagena made me tingle right down to my heels when I first heard of it."

"Here, you can't coax me into discussing anything like that, you fine big brute," protested McClement. "It won't do at all. Do you think you are a blooming reincarnation? Better come to my room and have a drink and forget it."

"Then how do you explain it?" was the stubborn question. "On the level, I am getting worried about myself."

"No occasion for it, Dick. You are a coincidence, in a way, and a vastly interesting one. What ails you, however, is the spirit of romance and adventure. You didn't know you had it in you. Youth often finds it in a first voyage to the tropics. I was that way myself. And the Spanish Main has a beguiling magic of its own. Most of these wild tales were fresh to you. Unconsciously you identified yourself with them because you knew you were bred from that same strain of Elizabethan seamen."

"Have it your own way," rather sulkily agreed Richard Cary, "but there is more to this than you can figure out, as wise as you are."

McClement had implanted a suggestion which oddly lingered in Cary's thoughts and colored them with strange conjectures. Who or what was the real Richard Cary? The brawny rover of Devon who had diced with the devil and the deep sea, or the prosaic son of New Hampshire farming folk who had viewed seafaring as a means of earning his bread?

"Two Richard Carys," reflected this second officer of the *Tarragona*. "All my life I may have been a mixture of both and didn't know it. When I got sore at something and cleared for action, like wading into that bunch of fo'castle outlaws on the last Western Ocean voyage, I must have been the big Dick Cary of Devon that found his fun in walloping the Spaniards."

His meditations trailed off into nebulous realms, into a

haze of conjectures and dreams and anticipations. Instead of taking each day as it came, he found himself looking forward to something. It seemed to be beckoning him. Somewhere in these romantic seas, adventure awaited him. The chief engineer read aloud a poem that matched this new mood. Richard Cary listened with a smile on his face.

"Could man be drunk forever
With liquor, love or fights,
Lief should I rouse at morning
And lief lie down of nights.

"But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And if they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts."

CHAPTER III

A GREAT GALLEON

Señorita Teresa Fernandez was the stewardess of the *Tarragona*. A dark, handsome young woman, she wore a cap and uniform of white, severely plain, that were singularly becoming. They also conveyed the impression that she had no time for sentiment or frivolity. She talked easily, with a flash of white teeth, a sparkling eye, and graceful gestures. The ladies were apt to confide their affairs to her when she carried the breakfast trays to their rooms.

In return she told them various things about herself. She had been left motherless when a child. Her father, a South American merchant who had traveled much and visited many countries of Europe, had taken her with him and she had learned to know the sea and to speak French and Italian and English. He had died after very sad business troubles and there had been no relatives to look after her except an uncle, a very eccentric and disagreeable old gentleman to get along with.

She had preferred making her own way in the world to seeking shelter under her uncle's roof. She was very young for a stewardess? Yes, but her father had been a friend of certain officials of the Fruit Company, and she had been given a trial. It was enough for her to say that she had been kept in the service. For one whose family was very old and dignified, with an honored name, it was unusual, in a way; but what would you? If Teresa Fernandez was not ashamed to be earning an honest living, why pay attention to what others might say?

When off duty she liked to sit in a wicker chair near the saloon staircase of the *Tarragona*. It was a cool, breezy place. She was close enough to the electric bells to respond to any summons. It was convenient for chatting with her friends as they passed, the second steward, the wireless operators, the purser, or the doctor. They agreed that Señorita Fernandez was a good scout.

Now and then Richard Cary had stopped for a bit of gossip. He liked this cheerful, good-looking young stewardess who always had a smile for him and a gay word of greeting. She offered to darn his socks and overhaul his shirts for missing buttons, and refused payment for it. This was out of the ordinary. She was a thrifty soul who overlooked no opportunities to add to her income.

From his seat in the dining-saloon, Cary often caught her looking at him when she was resting in the wicker chair near the landing. And when their eyes met, the tint in the olive cheek of Teresa Fernandez was likely to deepen. It was to be surmised that she was a woman of feelings as well as a very competent stewardess.

During the run from Jamaica to the Spanish Main, Dick Cary paused oftener and stayed longer beside the wicker chair. He had lost that air of serene indifference to the feminine equation. This Teresa Fernandez strongly attracted him. She knew ships and the sea and the ports of many climes. She made conversation delightfully easy.

One evening he found her standing on the lower deck, in a corner sheltered from the wind. A scarf of Spanish lace was thrown over her ebon, lustrous hair. She was alluring, exotic, a woman in another rôle than that of the efficient, industrious stewardess of the *Tarragona*.

"What are you, Spanish or Portuguese?" asked Richard Cary, gazing down at her from his commanding height.

"Oh, Spanish, 'most all of it," laughed Teresa Fernandez, with a tilt of her shapely head. "Where do you think I come from, Don Ricardo Cary?"

"From Spain? Vigo? Santander? Bilbao? I know that coast. Fine women in those ports. They were easy to look at."

"*Gracias, señor.* Is it a compliment?" she archly replied. "But I am not a fine woman — just a stewardess in funny clothes like a nurse or something. Ah, yes, I know Spain. I have been there in ships, but my home is not there. I am a Colombian, from Cartagena. Yes, my dear mother and father they died in Cartagena, and my uncle he lives there now."

"Cartagena?" echoed Richard Cary, his pulse beating faster. "Did you really come from that old town? And you know it well?"

"Better than any other place, you bet," cried Teresa Fernandez, her rounded shoulder touching Cary's arm. "This Cartagena — poof! she is too old and dead, you understand. Plenty of big walls and forts and plazas for the tourists to see, but it is not up-to-date, not one little bit. Hot and stupid! Lots of people there, but they are too slow. Nothing doing, thank you."

"I could tell you some things about Cartagena," said Richard Cary, "but they might not interest you. I have been reading and dreaming about it until I know the whole story by heart."

"The history, you mean, Don Ricardo?" she exclaimed, with a disdainful shrug. "The books you have been reading so hard? My gracious, I can tell you better stories than that. Look at me! I am what you call a chapter of the old history of Cartagena. Is it not much nicer to study me?"

"Very much nicer," warmly agreed the yellow-haired

giant of a sailor. He dared to let his arm steal around her trim waist and to press her close.

Teresa Fernandez laughed softly nor drew herself away. It was necessary, however, for her to explain:

"You must not think I am this way with the other boys in the ship. No, I am never this way at all. You ask them if you want to. They will say Señorita Fernandez is very proper — she minds her own business all the time. My goodness, Don Ricardo, what can I do with you? You are so strong, so terrible. I never saw such a man in my life. Will you not have some mercy on poor Teresa?"

True it was that she had never met such a man as this. Her heart might flutter, however, but it was not so easy to turn her head. An episode, this? Perhaps, but it was not to be resisted.

"A chapter of history, are you, Teresa?" smiled he. "Then you are all I want to read from now on. I was surely wasting my good time on books."

"You were pretty thick, it seemed so," said she. "Always talk, talk with that chief engineer. Listen! Now let *me* tell you something. My great-great — I don't know how many times — grandfather was the *capitan* of the great galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. His name it was Don Juan Diego Fernandez, a man very proud — what you call noble blood. There was his galleon, four hundred sailors and soldiers and maybe a hundred cannon, in Cartagena harbor. When we go into port, you will see just where she was anchored that time. My brave ancestor, this Don Juan Diego Fernandez, he was all ready to make the voyage to Spain with his galleon full of gold and silver bars from the mines of Peru, eh? The treasure it was brought across the Isthmus of Panama on the backs of mules. You know. It was the plate fleet that sailed once a year for

Cadiz. This my old Don Juan Diego Fernandez he waited for the other galleons.

"*Valgame Dios!* Right into the harbor of Cartagena sailed the Englishmen, the *piraticos*. The forts bang at them plenty. They give those forts the merry laugh. Two little ships! My old grandfather, so proud in his gold armor, he was not scared at all. He would sink these crazy little ships and send the English heretics to the Holy Inquisition in Cartagena. Now listen to this! What *do* you suppose? Mother of God, they gave Don Juan Diego Fernandez no show at all to fire his hundred cannon and shoot the muskets of his four hundred sailors and soldiers. Did he get a run for his money? I guess not! First thing you know, one little English ship is tied fast on the starboard side of the tremendous big galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, and the other little ship on the port side.

"*Carramba!* These crazy Englishmen they climb to the decks of that galleon just like monkeys. These four hundred Spanish sailors and soldiers are all chopped to pieces. The tall galleon she is on fire and blazes all up. And these English *piraticos* dump the gold and silver bars through the ports, into their two little ships, just like you shovel coal.

"Whew! My old grandfather in his shiny armor, all so grand and brave, has to give up his sword to the English *capitan*. He is treated very nice as a prisoner, but he has to get ransom for himself in Cartagena, four thousand pieces of eight. Some money, to buy old Don Juan Diego Fernandez with! Maybe if those wicked Englishmen had not captured the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, I will be a rich woman now and not have to go to sea."

"Yes, the old boy was out of luck," heartily agreed Richard Cary. "Of course I feel more like cheering the

Englishmen. Do you happen to know the names of their ships?"

"Yes. It is written down in Spanish, in the library of the Bishop of Cartagena. My father made a copy one time. The ships were named the *Bonaventure* and the *Rose of Plymouth*."

Richard Cary seemed to forget the allurement of Teresa Fernandez. He folded his arms and stood detached and erect, staring out at the darkened sea. It was thus he stood whenever these misty, fleeting emotions came to disquiet him. McClement was right, no doubt. It was nothing more than the voice of romance to which hitherto he had been deaf. He brushed a hand across his eyes. His massive body relaxed. He laughed awkwardly, patted Teresa's soft cheek, and muttered:

"You described it so well that I seemed to see the thing just as it happened."

"Please do not look like that again," said Teresa, her accents slightly tremulous. "You scare me. It was just like the ghost of one of those mad Englishmen in the little ships. I was going to tell you some more, but you must be nice and gentle. The ship's bell from the galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* was saved by a Spanish officer from a fort when the hulk drifted ashore. This one he gave the bell to my old ancestor, Don Juan Diego Fernandez, and it stayed always in Cartagena. I give you my word, Ricardo, it is hanging right now in the *patio* of my uncle's house, close to the Plaza de la Independencia. There is the bronze bell, very beautiful, and it hangs from an oak timber that was in the galleon. If you go ashore with me, I will show you the bell in my uncle's *patio*. We can sit there, and my uncle he will amuse you. He is a very funny old guy."

"The bell of the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*," Richard Cary mused aloud. "Yes, I shall want to see it, Teresa."

"Hum-m, in Cartagena you will be admired, let me tell you that, Ricardo," said she, with a flash of asperity. "A girl in every port? And you have made a fool of Teresa Fernandez. It does not happen every day. I swear by the blessed Santa Marta."

"I'll swear it never happened to me before — to find a girl like you and fall in love with her," was his ardent declaration.

"Do you truly love me, Ricardo? Such a man as you?" Her sigh was both wistful and happy. "I was hoping — I thought I saw it in your eyes, in your smile, but —"

For answer he kissed her on the lips, clinging lips that returned the caress. Responsively she surrendered to his masterful sway. In her heart was the faith to believe that he could never be fickle or inconstant, once his love was pledged. A girl in every port? She had spoken in jest.

It was time for them to part. On watch, later in the night, he found himself repeating:

> "Could man be drunk forever
> With liquor, love or fights,
> Lief should I rouse at morning
> And lief lie down of nights."

He stood alone with the wind and the clamorous sea and the stars in the velvet sky. Gazing forward from the bridge, the ship's derrick booms and cargo winches were obscurely shadowed. The forecastle deck and lofty prow lifted against the curtain of night. The spray broke over them and beat like gusts of rain. It was possible to forget that this was a modern steamer, infinitely complex and cunningly contrived, a steel trough driven by tireless engines. To Richard Cary she was a ship steering across the

Caribbean as ships had steered in bygone centuries. Never had his heart beat so high nor had he been conscious of such a keen-edged joy in living.

Teresa Fernandez, the blood in whose veins ran back to Don Juan Diego Fernandez, commander of the shattered treasure galleon! It pleased Richard Cary's awakened fancy to picture such a girl as this in the Cartagena of long ago, a scarf of Spanish lace thrown over her lustrous hair, and a tall, fair Devon lad to woo her when the seamen of the *Bonaventure* had landed on the beach to parley for ransom.

At breakfast next morning, Cary could see the competent stewardess, graceful, light of foot, flitting to and fro on this errand or that, with a shrewd eye to the main chance. No nonsense, her aspect seemed to say. She was the "good scout," the unsentimental friend of the second steward, the wireless operators, the purser, and the doctor. She colored divinely, however, when her sailor lover smiled a greeting from his table. A little later, when he passed her on the staircase, and they were unobserved, her fingers lightly brushed the sleeve of his coat.

The *Tarragona* was approaching the Colombian coast. In the afternoon a trifling incident occurred. It was destined, however, to affect the fortunes of Richard Cary in a manner unforeseen. Captain Jordan Sterry, that vigorous figure of a middle-aged shipmaster, had displayed a fatherly interest in a pert young creature with bobbed hair who seemed to enjoy it, for lack of a better game to play. He had invited her to visit the bridge. It was a courtesy often shown favored passengers.

The second officer was on duty. He happened to overhear some chance remark of the skipper, a rather silly thing to say, fatuous in a man old enough to be the bobbed

one's father. Most unluckily Richard Cary chuckled aloud. A lively sense of the ridiculous was too much for him. The infatuated Captain Sterry turned and glared. Cary was fairly caught. His face betrayed him. It mirrored the merciless verdict of youth. Words could have put it no more bitingly.

Captain Sterry turned red. He bit his lip. His second mate thought him absurd. To be laughed at was degrading, intolerable. It penetrated his vanity and seared his soul like acid.

A fleeting tableau, but Cary had made an enemy who both hated and feared him. His offense was beyond all forgiveness. He stepped to a wheel-house window and took the binocular from the rack. It occupied him to watch a distant steamer almost hull down. He felt rather sorry for what he had done. It was uncomfortable to think of the look in the skipper's eyes, not so much anger as profound humiliation. Never again would these twain be happy in the same ship together.

It meant that Richard Cary might have to leave the *Tarragona* and find another berth. This was his regretful conclusion. He liked the ship nor could he imagine himself as forsaking the Caribbean Sea to return to the Western Ocean trade.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANGER OF COLONEL FAJARDO

THE steamer sighted Cartagena in the rosy mists of dawn. It seemed to rise from the sea and float like a mirage. It was a mass of towers, domes, and battlements, of stone houses tinted pink and yellow with tiled roofs that gleamed and wavered. The surf broke against the wall of enduring masonry which marched around this ancient city of the *conquistadores*, a mighty wall broken here and there by massive gateways and bastions.

Defiantly facing the sea, secure of itself, this proud stronghold of Cartagena de Indias had been increasingly fortified until it had become impregnable to the foes who, in the very early days, had harried and plundered it. These walls and escarpments, the flanking towers and the guardian forts looming from the near-by hills and forelands, had cost the kings of Spain untold millions drained from the fabulous mines of Potosi. They had been determined to make this Caribbean seaport the Gibraltar of the New World.

The *Tarragona* changed her course and moved to the southward of the city, past the tall palms clustered on the hot, white beaches. What appeared to be a wide entrance to the harbor was soon revealed, but the breakers frothed against a barrier that ran athwart it like a reef. On the chart this reef was a curiously straight line, as if laid down with a ruler. Richard Cary was shading his eyes with his hand when the chief officer remarked:

"If the Colombians had any get-up and gumption they would blow a hole in that submerged wall and open the old

ship channel. It was built across there, God knows how long ago, to keep the buccaneers out. Some building job, that! There must be almost a mile of it."

"Yes, it was put there after the Englishmen sailed in past the forts and sacked the town," quickly exclaimed Cary. "It wasn't there when Drake took Cartagena. He used this Boca Grande."

It was necessary for the *Tarragona* to proceed seven miles to the southward and enter the narrow passage of the Boca Chica, tortuous and difficult, and then to make her way through the reaches of a blue lagoon. She passed between the outermost forts, gray and grass-grown, but still resisting the slow processes of decay. On the port side was the Castillo de San Fernando with its crenelated walls and deep embrasures in which rested dismounted brass carronades. In the lee of the lofty water-gate rode a Colombian trading schooner. A few Indian canoes were drawn up on the beach.

On the starboard side, the Castillo de San Juan jutted from the sea like a huge rock. Patches of verdure had found root in the crumbling counterscarps. Flowering vines wreathed the round sentry boxes.

Steaming slowly through the placid lagoon, the *Tarragona* found a circuitous path to Cartagena. The wharf, the corrugated iron cargo sheds, the railway tracks, were ugly and modern. Looking away from them, however, one saw only the stately seaport of the vanished centuries. Behind its ramparts the galleried streets and shaded plazas drowsed through the heat of the day until the breeze came sweeping from the sea with the setting sun.

The *Tarragona* had much freight to discharge before resuming the voyage to Santa Marta and filling her holds with bananas. Richard Cary had to be an efficient second

mate with his mind on the job while the clattering winches plucked the rope slings filled with cases, bales, and casks from the open hatches. At the noon hour he found leisure to loaf under an awning.

Teresa Fernandez found him there. She had something to say. One of her swift and supple gestures indicated a swarthy Colombian in a handsome military uniform who reclined in a steamer chair on the promenade deck. He was gaunt, grizzled, and harsh-featured. Just now his eyes were closed. His hands were comfortably clasped across his belt. He was enjoying a brief siesta after a bountiful luncheon in the saloon as the guest of the ship.

"You see that fellow?" exclaimed Teresa, with a shrug that betokened disfavor. "All his brass buttons and medals? He is the *Comandante* of the Port, Colonel Fajardo. The boss of the custom-house police and things like that. What do you think of him?"

"Is he a friend of yours?" Dick Cary cautiously parried.

"Last voyage that Colonel Fajardo asked me to marry him," candidly answered Teresa. "Yes, that fellow told me he was in love with me. He is not as old as he looks, unless he is a big liar. Forty-two years old he says."

Cary glowered at the somnolent *Comandante* of the Port. In a way, this was startling news. Next he fixed a questioning eye on the charming Teresa whose demeanor hinted that, as a suitor, the colonel had not been finally disposed of on that last voyage. She flashed a brilliant smile, furtively caressed Cary's hand, and deigned to explain:

"It was just like this, Ricardo. This Colonel Fajardo is a very important man in Cartagena. The Fruit Company must treat him nice and pat him on the back or he will make trouble for the ships. He can find something wrong with the papers and delay the sailings or maybe a poor

sailor is caught smuggling some cigarettes ashore. You see, I am in the Company's employ and I must not make this Colonel Fajardo mad with me. It is best to be *diplomatique*, to jolly him along, you understand?"

"It sounds well enough," growled Richard Cary, by no means appeased, "but what about *this* voyage? Has that buzzard proposed to you again?"

"Oh, yes, as soon as he came aboard this morning. He was waiting, very impatient. He had told me he had plenty of money and a very good house. His pay is not much, you know, except what he can steal. I asked my uncle in Cartagena to find out about this Colonel Fajardo. My uncle he cannot come down to the ship to-day, but he sends me a letter. This fine *Comandante* is a false alarm, Ricardo. He has spent all his money on women and his house is mortgaged up to the neck. He is no good at all. Bah! Why should I marry that fellow, even if I am a poor girl that has to go to sea and work very hard?"

"Have you told him so?" sternly demanded Dick Cary. Her nonchalance rather staggered him.

"Yes, I could not string him along any more," serenely confessed Teresa Fernandez.

"But if he had all kinds of money, what then?"

"Never, Ricardo. He disgusts me. That last voyage, when I told him to wait, you had not kissed me then."

"You are *my* sweetheart," he passionately exclaimed. "And I'll take care of that Colombian blackguard if he pesters you again."

"You would kill him, Ricardo, because you love me?" happily sighed Teresa Fernandez. "But, listen, don't you go making trouble with that man if he acts jealous. I will be glad when the ship sails for Santa Marta to-morrow."

Richard Cary's laugh was lightly scornful. He held the

amorous Colonel Fajardo in very small esteem. By this time the latter gentleman had awakened from his siesta. He yawned and blinked at the harbor upon whose oily surface a small sailing vessel drifted becalmed in the blistering heat. Then his gaunt frame uprose from the steamer chair and he stiffly straightened himself in the frogged white uniform with the ornate gold shoulder-straps.

He was not a man to be dismissed with a careless laugh. A visage tanned to the hue of brown leather was bitten deep with the lines of a hard and cruel temper. The thin lips and jutting nose were predatory. One thought of him as perhaps a soldier who had seen more arduous service than this lazy billet of *Comandante* of the Port. He had the air of command, but sloth and dissipation were corroding him as rust destroys a good weapon.

Yawning, Colonel Fajardo lighted a cigarette and smoothed the wrinkles from his tunic. Then he twisted the ends of a mustache that was prematurely flecked with gray. He sauntered forward, to the gangway, and swore viciously at two of his custom-house guards who had retreated to the shade of a deck-house. One of them he kicked by way of emphasis. From this part of the ship he caught sight of Teresa Fernandez under the awning with the huge, yellow-haired young second mate of the *Tarragona*.

At a glance it was easy to perceive that they found this dalliance agreeable. Excessively and infernally agreeable, in the opinion of this interested Colonel Fajardo. It was a mordant sight for him to behold. He felt suddenly feverish. It was, indeed, like a touch of *calentura*.

A certain thing was revealed to him. It displayed itself beyond a shadow of doubt. Teresa Fernandez had considered his offer of marriage. Yes, she had been favorable,

his vanity led him to believe, delaying the answer until the ship had returned to Cartagena.

Now she had rejected him; the humble stewardess of the *Tarragona* rejecting the renowned Colonel Fajardo, *Comandante* of the Port, who might have had so many other young and beautiful women. It was because she had found a Yankee lover. Little devil, would she so wantonly flaunt this great, stupid beast of a sailor before the eyes of Colonel Fajardo? It was amusement for those two.

The Colonel's lean fingers quivered as he lighted a fresh cigarette. The thin lips twitched beneath the martial mustache. He turned on his heel and strolled aft to the smoking-room. There he slumped upon a cushioned settle and rested his elbows upon the table. He ordered a whiskey and soda and drank it very slowly. Another Colombian official joined him, a loquacious person who babbled about various matters and was indifferent to the brooding, ungracious demeanor of Colonel Fajardo. After a while this acquaintance departed.

The colonel continued to drink, steadily and alone, until the chief engineer drifted in for a cold bottle of beer. He was sweaty and dirty and his legs ached. For sociability's sake he sat down at the table with the *Comandante* of the Port. It was an error, as he presently discovered. The morose gentleman of the gold shoulder-straps contributed no more than an occasional grunt or a bored, "*Si, señor.*"

His eyes were slightly bloodshot and failed to focus. Otherwise his sobriety could not be challenged. He brightened only when about to plunge his predatory beak into another whiskey and soda. Having prudently slaked his own thirst, the chief engineer betook himself back to the task of tinkering with a balky condenser in a temperature that would have made Hades seem frigid. Later in the

afternoon, when he emerged on deck for air, he accosted Richard Cary.

"Hearken to me, shipmate. If you insist on sparking the beautiful stewardess, I suggest that you suspend operations until Cartagena is in the offing. What I mean to say is, a little discretion wouldn't be half bad."

"Thanks, Mac, but if you had just as soon mind your own damn business," was the discourteous retort, "I can hearken a lot easier. How did you get this way?"

"By using a normal intelligence and powers of observation in which you are so colossally lacking," was the unruffled reply. "You have already driven Colonel Fajardo to drink. He has been at it ever since luncheon, according to Jimmy, the bar-keep. No, he isn't drunk, but, my word, his disposition is ruined. He may be chewing glass by this time."

"Humph! You read too many novels, Mac. Trying to stage a melodrama?"

"This from you, Dick Cary? You wild ass! After boring me with your fantastic nonsense about buried memories of the Spanish Main? Accuse me of being stagey when I offer a friendly bit of common sense? Oh, very well, if you get a knife in your ribs or a bullet in your back, you needn't expect me to hold your hand and listen to your last words. I have heard gossip in Cartagena, that this Colonel Fajardo has bumped off one or two sprightly young *caballeros* who got in his way."

"And you listen to such rot?" scoffed Dick Cary. "The drunken counterfeit! Somebody ought to call his bluff. I wish he would give me a chance."

"The Devon lad? Spaniards are good hunting," quizzed McClement. "Up, my hearties, and at 'em."

Instead of dining at his favorite café in Cartagena,

Colonel Fajardo remained on board the *Tarragona*. He swayed just a trifle as he walked into the saloon, but his bearing was haughty and sedate. He held his liquor well, did this seasoned soldier of the tropics. A man of blood and iron! More accurate, perhaps, to say that he had a copper lining. Whatever emotions may have tormented him, his appetite for food was not blighted. He ate enormously and gulped down cup after cup of black coffee.

This treatment was sobering. The colonel's eyes were again in focus. They expressed an intelligence alert and sinister. His gait was normal when he returned to the promenade deck. He posted himself where he could observe the gangway steps that led down to the wharf. It was not long before Teresa Fernandez appeared. As he suspected, she had been warily avoiding him. Just now she failed to see him because she was looking elsewhere, forward, where the stairs led down from the officers' quarters on the boat deck.

This was a woman of a very different aspect from the industrious stewardess of the *Tarragona* in her white garb so severely trim and plain. The wide black hat framed a face girlish and piquant. The gown was of some gray stuff, thin and shimmering. It revealed the soft contours of her shoulders, of her slenderly modeled arms. The ancestry which could boast of a Don Juan de Fernandez, captain of the great galleon of the plate fleet, had survived in Teresa's small-boned wrists, in the curves of her slim silken-clad ankles. Greedily did the lustful Colonel Fajardo gaze at her. Damnation! Never had he so greatly desired to possess a woman. In proof of this he had been even willing to marry her.

She gayly waved a hand, but not at him. The second officer of the ship was hastening to join her, the great,

insolent ox of a Yankee sailor. He, too, was in shore-going clothes, a jaunty Panama with a crimson band, cream-colored suit of pongee, a bamboo stick crooked on his arm. He was so flagrantly the happy lover off for a holiday hour ashore that Colonel Fajardo muttered blasphemies the most picturesque. The intention was to annoy him, to make him beside himself. It was odious.

The perfidious Teresa Fernandez hung on the arm of Richard Cary as they descended to the wharf and walked to the custom-house gate beyond which waited a group of little open carriages, plying for hire. The drivers raised their voices in clamorous persuasion, naming extortionate prices. Teresa scolded them in voluble Spanish as *piraticos* and children of the Evil One. They meekly subsided. The carriage with the least bony and languorous nag rattled over the cobblestones in the direction of the nearest gateway through the city wall.

Colonel Fajardo moved to the gangway. He halted to think. His hard, worn face was not so angry as perplexed. It was to be surmised that things had taken a disappointing turn. Possibly it would have pleased him more had the second officer gone ashore alone. The fact that Teresa Fernandez had accompanied him intruded a certain awkwardness. In a way, it was unforeseen. In previous voyages she had declined to leave the ship after dark.

Colonel Fajardo absently fingered a scar on his chin. The circumstances were regrettable, but he was not one to neglect a matter of importance so long as there was the remotest chance of success. Immediately he made his way down to the wharf and strode as far as the office of the customs. He entered this small building, locked the door, and talked softly into the telephone. The conference was brief. His language was so guarded that it could mean

nothing at all if overheard. The message was a masterpiece of circumlocution. It was understood, however, by a certain sallow young man who had been playing a guitar in a café of shady repute in a dingy street of Cartagena.

He had been waiting for a message. In the afternoon a dusty urchin had come from the wharf with a few unsigned words scrawled on a bit of paper advising him to hold himself in readiness for orders.

In employing the telephone, Colonel Fajardo displayed the modern spirit. In certain aspects of his private affairs he harked back to earlier centuries. From the wharf he returned to the ship and sought the smoking-room. With a mien of somber abstraction he applied himself to a whiskey and soda.

Meanwhile the shabby open carriage had rattled through a cavern of a gateway in the wall. Cartagena by moonlight! Richard Cary was glad he had waited until night. All traces of garish modernity were banished by the sorcery of the silver moon. In the shadows of the winding streets, gallants whispered at grated windows. The tall houses with overhanging balconies that almost met across these narrow streets were gravely beautiful. In the stones above their doors were chiseled the crests of conquering *hidalgos* whose bones had been dust these hundreds of years.

There was almost no traffic. Strollers loitered in the grateful breeze, a group was singing as it passed. There was the hum of voices from the balconies, the distant music of a band in a plaza. To Richard Cary it was like the ghost of a city, untouched by change or dissolution, which dwelt with memories great and tumultuous. He gave himself over to its spell.

Teresa Fernandez also was silent. When she spoke, it was to say, with deep emotion:

"It is so wonderful to be with you, Ricardo, away from the ship and all those noisy people. To-night we seem to belong right here in my old Cartagena, you and I. This is like a beautiful dream, but, ah, dreams never last very long. Will you love me for more than a little while?"

"Aye, Teresa mine, forever and ever. McClement calls me crazy, but I feel as though I had loved you in Cartagena long ago."

"Santa Maria, do I look as old as that?" she rippled. "And I thought I had made myself *muy dulce* for you. If you will stay crazy about me, I don't care how crazy that old chief engineer thinks you are."

When deeply stirred, Ricardo was not one to turn a ready compliment. She was satisfied, however, with his smile of fond approval, with his manifest pride in her slender and elegant beauty. One thought made them wistful. To forsake the open carriage and wander at their will, to a stone bench in the shadows of the Plaza Fernandez de Madrid, or to the murmuring beach, this was their desire. But they could not remain long away from the ship.

Teresa had petulantly explained that there was no evading a call at the house of her uncle, Señor Ramon Bazán. It was a promise, made last voyage, and she was a woman of her word. Besides, this funny old guy of an uncle, said she, had vowed to leave her all his money when he was dead. It was necessary to be nice to him while he was alive. Ha, not one dollar would he give her until he was dead, not if she begged him on her knees. A terrible tightwad was the Señor Ramon Bazán.

Richard Cary made no comment. He felt sorry for the girl who had been compelled to travel rough roads of life,

courageously battling for survival. She was not sordid, but anxious. Money was a weapon of self-defense. She had been compelled to think too much of it.

The carriage halted in front of the frowning residence of Uncle Ramon Bazán. The iron-studded door was stout enough to have stopped a volley of musket balls. It was swung open by a barefooted Indian lad in ragged shirt and trousers. Teresa brushed him aside and led the way into the *patio*, open to the sky, where a fountain tinkled and flamboyant flowers bloomed. A little brown monkey scampered up a trellis and swung by its tail. A green parrot screeched impolite Spanish epithets from a cage on the wall.

The Indian youth shuffled into the *patio* and timidly informed the señorita that her uncle had gone out on an errand and would soon return.

"I hope he forgets to come back, Ricardo," said Teresa. "Now we can sit down by the oleander tree and I will show you the bell of the old galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*."

They crossed the moonlit square of the *patio*. Cary saw a heavy framework of Spanish oak timbers, more durable than iron. From the cross-piece was suspended the massy bell whose elaborately chased surface was green with time and weather. By the flare of a match, Cary discovered a royal coat of arms in high relief and the blurred letters of an inscription, presumably the name of the galleon and of the port whence she had hailed.

Teresa Fernandez groped for the clapper and let it swing against the flaring rim. The bell responded with a note sonorous and musical. Lingeringly vibrant, the sound filled the *patio*. With more vigor Richard Cary swung the clapper. The voice of the galleon's bell swelled in volume. The air fairly quivered and hummed. It was unlike any

ship's bell that Richard Cary had ever heard at sea or in port. And yet its timbre thrilled some responsive chord in the dim recesses of his soul. It was such a bell as had flung its mellow echoes against the walls of Cartagena, of Porto Bello, of Nombre de Dios when the tall galleons of the plate fleet had ridden to their hempen cables.

The sound of the bell had died to a murmur when Teresa spoke. The quality of her voice was attuned in harmony with it, or so it seemed to the listening Richard Cary.

"When I was a little girl," said she, "I liked to come and play with the old bell. I had to stand up on my toes and push the clapper with my two hands. Dong! Dong! It sang songs to me. They made me feel like you say you do when you hear the wind in the palm trees, Ricardo. There is something about this bell — very queer, but just as true as true can be. You will not laugh, like the other *Americanos*. If anything very bad is going to happen to the one it belongs to, this bell of the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* it strikes four times. *Dong! dong! — Dong! dong!* Four bells, like on board a ship. When there is going to be death or some terrible bad luck! It has always been like that, 'way, 'way back to my ancestor Don Juan Diego Fernandez."

Richard Cary nodded assent. It was not for him to find fault with a legend such as this. Teresa, encouraged by his sympathy, went on to say:

"Yes, it was heard the night before the two little English ships, the *Bonaventure* and the *Rose of Plymouth*, came sailing into Cartagena harbor. *Dong! dong! — Dong! dong!* There was no Spanish sailor near at all on deck when it struck four bells. A hundred years ago there was a General Fernandez who fought with Bolivar in the revolution against Spain. His wife she sits right here in this *patio* and

waits for news from her brave husband. One night it is very quiet and everybody is asleep. She is waked up. What does she hear? Not so loud, but very sad and clear. *Dong! dong! — Dong! dong!* Four bells!

"This poor woman knows her husband must be dead in some battle for the flag of Bolivar. Pretty soon a soldier comes from the Magdalena with a message, but she has had her message already. Another time, my Ricardo, it was a Fernandez that got drowned in a ship. It went down in a hurricane off Martinique. The bell told his mother. Now I have told you enough gloomy stuff, Ricardo. Maybe that old bell will belong to me some day. I think I will throw it in the harbor. It is a Jonah."

CHAPTER V

RICHARD CARY STROLLS ALONE

A WISP of an elderly man appeared in the moonlit *patio*, with no more sound than the rustle of a dry leaf. He seemed to move with an habitual air of stealth. Bent and meager, his linen clothes flapped on him. He peered this way and that. The little brown monkey came dancing down from the trellis and perched, chattering, upon his shoulder. He stood fanning himself with a dingy straw hat. He was short of breath, wheezing audibly. No matter how trifling his errands, it was to be conjectured that he always flitted to and fro in a hurried, secretive manner.

Teresa moved out of the shadows. He jumped back, easily startled. His niece called out some affectionate Spanish phrase and dutifully advanced to embrace him. Señor Ramon Bazán pecked at her cheek, cackled a welcome, and wriggled clear. He was fascinated by the formidable size of the stranger who hovered between the galleon bell and the oleander tree. It was a phenomenon that provoked excited curiosity.

Uncle Ramon Bazán sputtered questions. Teresa proudly presented the second officer of the *Tarragona* who felt baffled because he could talk no Spanish. This failed to check the wordy welcome of the uncle of Teresa. He was impressed and amused. On tiptoe he patted Cary's mighty shoulder and measured his height. It was like a terrier making friends with a Saint Bernard.

"He says you are as big as the hill of La Popa," swiftly interpreted Teresa. "You do his poor house an honor.

Everything in it is yours. You have made a delicious hit with him, Ricardo. He does not like many people."

Cary bowed and conveyed his thanks. Uncle Ramon chuckled like the squeak of a rusty hinge. He had made a joke, explained Teresa. Why offer the house to this Señor Cary when he could easily carry it off on his back if he felt so disposed? They found chairs near the fountain. The Indian *muchacho* brought glasses of iced lemonade. Cary smoked his pipe and idly listened. To hear Teresa's voice, flowing, musical, talking in the language of her native Cartagena, was a new delight.

Presently the wee brown monkey clambered to his knee and sat there. The wrinkled visage bore an odd resemblance to that of Señor Ramon Bazán. Richard Cary knocked the ashes from his briar pipe and laid it on the bench beside him. The monkey noted the procedure, with a grave scrutiny. Then it picked up the pipe, carefully rapped the bowl against Cary's knee, and inserted the stem between its teeth. Cary courteously offered his match-box and tobacco-pouch. Uncle Ramon's shrill mirth was so violent that a coughing fit was nearly the death of him. Teresa was gleeful because to win the monkey's favor was a signal distinction. In her uncle's sight, it was the final seal of approval.

Soon it was time to go back to the ship. The host escorted them to the street and sent the Indian lad in quest of a carriage. He warmly urged Richard Cary to make the house his home whenever he was in port. It was expressed with gusto. They left him in the doorway, a bizarre figure, the monkey tucked under one arm.

"Never have I seen my uncle like this," said Teresa as they drove away. "He hates 'most everybody. You are his big pet, Ricardo. Any favor you ask, he will tumble over himself to do it."

"I was sorry I couldn't have a chat with him, he seemed so cordial. A comical old chap."

"Pooh, he can talk English when he wants to. He lived in Washington one time, for the government at Bogotá. He is funny. To-night it was a trick, his talking only Spanish. Maybe you would say something about him to me, eh? He was sizing you up. He is just as sly as that little monkey. But I must not speak so horrid of my uncle. He is a very old man — cracked — some bats in the *cabeza*. How old do you think he is?"

"I couldn't get a slant on him in the moonlight," answered Cary. "He is pretty well warped and dried up, but he seems to have a kick in him."

"Nobody knows how old that Ramon Bazán is, Ricardo. He looked just like this when I was a little, little girl."

Cary absently filled his briar pipe. Teresa snatched it from him and objected:

"That monkey was trying to smoke it just like a man. Dirty beast! Here, you take a cigarette from me and I will scrub that pipe with boiling water."

One other thing troubled her. That story of the galleon bell. Did Ricardo think she was stupid to believe all that stuff? It sounded true in the *patio*, in the moonlight of Cartagena, but would he laugh at her when he was at sea again in the *Tarragona* with that wise *amigo* of his, the chief engineer? Listen! It was no more wonderful than the marble pulpit in the cathedral, all carved with the images of the saints. It was well known to everybody that the Pope had commanded the best artists of Spain to carve that pulpit for a gift to the faithful people of Cartagena. The Pope had blessed it before the ship sailed from Cadiz. Oh, very long ago!

The ship was close to the Spanish Main when the English

buccaneers had captured her. They were very angry to find the cases of marble that were all carved with the blessed images of the Catholic saints. So they threw the cases overboard when they plundered the ship. All this heavy marble! It did not sink at all, but floated on the waves. A long time these cases of marble floated until, one day, they washed right up on the beach of Cartagena.

The bishop called all the people to see the holy miracle and there was a procession to the cathedral with incense and banners and hymns. And there is the marble pulpit to-day, and the priests saying Mass under the canopy.

Richard Cary gravely agreed that such a miracle could not be doubted, even by a heretic. And he did not have to be persuaded to believe in the marvelous powers of the galleon's bell to toll a warning of disaster. This comforted the heart of Teresa Fernandez, so shrewd and yet so credulous. She was radiantly happy in these golden moments with the man she loved.

He left her at the ship's gangway. The chief officer was on watch. Dour and taciturn, he was human enough to say:

"You didn't have to hurry back, Mr. Cary. A pity to cut it short on a night like this. The old man is ashore."

"That is very thoughtful of you, but the stewardess had to come back and report for duty."

"An uncommonly pretty young woman," was the gruff comment, "and as good as she looks, from all accounts. I can't blame you for taking notice. Don't lose your head, though. Going to sea is a dog's life for a man that's fool enough to get married."

"Exactly what I used to say," replied Cary, "but a man has been known to change his mind."

He drifted along the promenade deck and chatted with a

passenger or two. This failed to interest him. In the lee of the cargo sheds, where the ship was moored, the air was hot and heavy. He went to his room and tried to read. A cabin steward came in with the briar pipe, sent by Teresa who had thoroughly cleaned and boiled it. He lighted the pipe and went on deck again, roaming to and fro alone.

It occurred to him to walk into Cartagena, as far as the nearest shops, and buy some picture postcards to send to his mother in New Hampshire. He had noticed them in the windows, attractively colored, giving impressions really vivid of the charm and antiquity of the place. They would be treasured at home, probably passed around at a meeting of the missionary society or the Ladies' Aid.

It was an excuse to work off his restless humor. An absurd anticlimax, in a way, to be tied to the routine of a fruit steamer, to be separated from one's sweetheart because, in the rôle of a stewardess, she had to wait upon a lot of fussy, pampered women. Richard Cary swore under his breath. Dreams of adventure? The sense of tingling expectancy? Bonds not easy to break constrained him, habits of discipline and environment. He was torn two ways. It was a conflict between the two Richard Carys.

After finding the postal cards and mailing them, he walked through one quaint, shadowed street after another. Certain buildings he felt drawn to find, the House of the Holy Inquisition, the towered cathedral, which was so bold a landmark from seaward, the cloistered convents whose nuns had fled inland whenever the topsails of the buccaneers had gleamed off the Boca Grande or the Boca Chica.

He was passing a café when he noticed, with a casual glance, a military officer seated just inside the iron grillwork of a long window. The officer waved a hand and called out a courteous invitation. Cary recognized him as

Colonel Fajardo, the *Comandante* of the Port. This was rather surprising. Affability was unexpected. Richard Cary was intrigued. The chief engineer had taken pains to warn him against this gentleman as both truculent and dangerous where a woman was involved. Apparently Colonel Fajardo wished to dispel such an impression. He pointed at the tiny cognac glass in front of him and suavely suggested:

"Will you give me the pleasure? You are enjoying the lovely night, and alone? How unfortunate!"

"Thank you. I can tarry a few minutes," replied Cary. He entered the door and took a chair facing the Colombian colonel. The café was more than respectable. It was what one might have called a resort of fashion. A perfectly safe place in which to sit with Colonel Fajardo and sip a tiny glass of cognac. He was sober enough, reflected Cary. Haggard and a little the worse for wear, but not in the least quarrelsome. Jimmy, the bar-tender of the *Tarragona*, must have been unduly excited. No prospect of melodrama in such a situation as this.

Nonsense, to imagine plots of revenge and murder just because a man was a South American and had a few drinks in him! It was true enough that Colonel Fajardo looked the part. To incur his dislike and then encounter him in a dark street might possibly be unhealthy. Apparently, however, he had thought discretion the better part of valor. It was off with the old love and on with the new.

"You will stay in the *Tarragona?*" inquired the colonel, with an air of friendly solicitude. "You are fond of the ship and the trip to Colombian ports?"

"Yes, thank you. It is a pleasant change after the North Atlantic. I hope to stay in the ship, if only to see Cartagena again."

"Ah, ha, there is no other reason, Mr. Cary? Pardon me, I do not intend to be personal," murmured Colonel Fajardo. He laughed, without mirth. The leathery cheek was flushed. Richard Cary ignored the implication. He was not one to invite trouble. Let the other man show his hand.

Colonel Fajardo smothered a yawn. It had been a fatiguing day. Cary found little to say. At his leisure he finished the glass of cognac. Colonel Fajardo declined another. He had an engagement to wait for a friend. Cary therefore bade him good-night. A courtly bow from the waist, a graceful phrase, and the colonel sat himself down again.

Rather fortunate, reflected Richard Cary as he resumed his promenade through the streets of Cartagena. He would have to meet this man on shipboard every voyage. It might have been disagreeable, also awkward, a personal row with the *Comandante* of the Port.

Into a sleeping square hemmed in by houses rambled Richard Cary and came to the massive church of San Pedro Clavér whose bells had jangled in the squat tower through long centuries. At its altar the Spanish conquerors had knelt in ornate armor before invading the fetid jungles and daring the unknown mountains to seek the fabled El Dorado.

Crossing the square and halting to gaze at the church, Cary happened to notice, from the tail of his eye, several men loitering on a corner underneath a balcony. The shadows somewhat obscured them. He thought nothing of it. One thrummed a guitar. They were singing some plaintive, long-drawn love song with many minor chords.

The second mate of the *Tarragona* glanced at his watch. He ought to be retracing his course, in the direction of the

waterfront. He walked along one side of the square. The group of serenaders beneath the balcony strolled in the same direction. They were still singing. It was agreeable to listen to them.

Richard Cary turned into a street which was no more than a gash between shuttered walls of stone. No lights were visible. The musicians, care-free and idle, drifted into the same street and followed along behind him. They were in no haste. The night was still young. Cary felt like loitering until they finished a song whose refrain carried a cadence sweet and wistful.

They walked a little faster. The guitar and the harmonious voices were silenced. Richard Cary quickened his own gait and swung into a long, easy stride. Presently it caught his attention that the musicians had also increased their pace. He was not drawing away from them. This was a trifle odd. The Colombians of Cartagena were not apt to walk as fast as this. They seldom exerted themselves.

As a rule, this stalwart American mariner was contemptuously careless of danger nor borrowed trouble of any sort. He was likely to be unsuspicious. Now, however, he turned to glance over his shoulder at these unusually energetic Colombians. His ear noted that they were not shod with leather. Their footfalls made a quick, soft pit-pat on the stone pavement. It was like the tread of furtive animals.

They crossed a thin, white shaft of moonlight where a house had crumbled and fallen. It was discernible that they were young men, quick and slender, wearing white shirts, but no coats. A moment later Cary saw them divide, two flitting across the street.

He looked ahead of him. The street was like a dark ravine. It had taken a slight bend. He could see one

lighted window, perhaps a hundred feet distant, a long, yellow rectangle laced with iron bars.

He was unarmed. The bamboo cane was merely ornamental. Instinct told him that he stood in peril of his life. These bravos of Cartagena were not intent on robbery. They were of the breed of the mediæval night-hawks of the cloak and sword, the *gente de capa y espada*, the rufflers who did murder for hire.

Long of limb and deep-lunged, Richard Cary might have run away from them and saved his skin. There was no pith in these thugs of the Cartagena slums to overtake him in a stern chase. He flung the thought aside. By God, no Devon man had ever turned his back when outnumbered in these same narrow, frowning streets. Five to one? They paid him a handsome compliment.

He suddenly whirled about to face the pursuers. He stood massive and alert, head thrust forward, like a bull about to charge. The two bravos who had crossed the street came gliding back to take him in the rear. The three whom he faced deployed to encircle him. They moved rapidly, in silence.

He dreaded to hear a pistol shot. They were not as clumsy as that, to make a noise and alarm the street unless it had to be done that way. Richard Cary was ashamed to cry out for help. It was like striking his flag. He drew in his breath. His strong teeth were set tight together. His fists were clenched. They swung at his sides. They were like terrible mallets.

He moved, slowly, until his back touched the wall of the overhanging house. He was at bay. The bravos approached him like cats. They entertained a profound respect for him. The most reckless one of them plucked a knife from his shirt. He led the attack. A quick thrust or

two and the thing would be done. It would be like sticking a steer for beef.

Colonel Fajardo was waiting at the Café Dos Hermanos for the word that the business had been dispatched. He had the money ready in his pocket. It would not do to fail. *Madre de Dios*, no! Not when a man like that one gave the order. He knew too much about these five bad young men of Cartagena. He had them by the scruff of their necks, as you might say.

In spite of this, there was a reluctance to close in with the huge figure of the yellow-haired *Americano* who stood so silent, so unafraid, with his back against the wall. He was mysterious, terrifying. However, there could be no delay. It was a ticklish undertaking at best, to kill him in an open street, in the middle of the evening. Earlier they had trailed the open carriage in which he rode with the woman from the ship, but it had been impossible to arrange anything.

The leader of the bravos lunged forward, one arm upraised. He stooped low, to thrust up. The *Americano* had no pistol. He would have fired it by now. Before that upraised arm could drive home the knife, it was gripped between the elbow and shoulder. Richard Cary's hand had been as swift as the dart of a snake. Here was better luck than he had dared expect. His other hand clamped itself on the bravo's forearm.

Before the rest of them could rush in to cut him down, he leaped away from the wall, dragging his struggling captive by the arm. The fellow was scrawny, no great weight for Richard Cary to do with as he pleased. He planted his legs apart, tightened the grip of his two hands and swung the body of the helpless bravo by the arm as a handle. Sheer over his head he swung him, in a circle as he might have whirled a bludgeon.

As he swung this extraordinary weapon he ran forward, with an agility amazing, dumbfounding. It cleared the path. The four ruffians scattered. They were crying out to each other. One dropped upon his knees. Another flung himself flat. A third was not quick enough. The revolving body of the bravo, extended straight, seemingly rigid, struck him with a peculiar thud. He reeled and limped into the shadows.

With a laugh, Richard Cary released his grip. The bravo, converted into a missile, went hurtling into the middle of the street with a dreadful momentum. He flew as if propelled from a catapult. His body smote the cobblestones. It sprawled without motion.

Snatching at this brief respite, Richard Cary turned and ran. It was not a retreat. He was running for that lighted window with the rusty iron bars set in the ancient mortar. The four bravos rallied. They were mindful of the menace of Colonel Fajardo's wrath, as well as of the fat price he had promised them. They sprinted to overtake the fleeing *Americano*, wary to avoid such a blunder as had cracked the skull of their leader.

Richard Cary was too quick for them. He plunged against the iron bars of the window. A glance showed him an empty room. There was no help there. He had not hoped to find it. This was his own joyous battle, to be waged alone. At random he laid hold of an iron bar of the grating. Both ends of it were embedded in mortar which had become cracked and rotten. He braced a knee against the stone window ledge. His broad back heaved. The great shoulders strained. The veins purpled his temples. Suddenly his back straightened. The bar came away in his hands, bending, ripping out of the sockets in the mortar. It had been the work of a moment.

Now he had a weapon to his liking. Again he laughed. The bravos disliked the sound of that laugh. It made them tremble. By the light from the window they could see the iron bar in the hands of the colossal *Americano*. One of them jerked out a pistol and fired. The bullet clipped a lock of Cary's yellow hair.

Before the rascal could pull trigger again, the iron bar smote him a slanting blow on the neck. He crumpled upon the cobblestones. His neck was beyond mending. There were three of them left. Two took to their heels. Behind them the iron bar beat the air like a flail. They moaned prayers to San Pedro Clavér, to the Blessed Virgin herself. They were murderers grown suddenly religious.

One of them stumbled. Death fanned him with its breath. He tried to wheel, knife in hand. Over him loomed the dread figure of the giant with the charmed life. The bravo was of a mind to clasp his hands and wail for mercy. The iron bar fell. It crashed against his shoulder and crushed it like putty. He rolled over, kicking and making queer noises in his throat.

Richard Cary halted in his tracks. One lone bravo was in sight, fleeing for the slums which had spewed him forth. He ran with the staccato pit-pat-pat of feet that spurned the cobblestones. Never in his life had he run with such speed. A bullet could not have overtaken him.

Four of the gang had been disposed of. Where was the fifth? Richard Cary was puzzled. He turned to search the street behind him. As he moved, a shadow moved with him. It was the shadow of the fifth bravo. He had recovered his wits, this cool and vigilant one who had a flair for dexterous assassination. Instead of exposing himself to a blow from that bone-crushing iron bar, he had hugged the nearest wall, awaiting an opportunity, keeping himself at

Richard Cary's back, shifting whenever he did. He hunted like a ferret.

From a trousers pocket he withdrew a bit of rubber hose filled with bird shot, flexible and heavy. He slipped his hand through a loop of cord. The weapon hung from his wrist. In the other hand was a knife with a thin blade.

Unable to fathom the disappearance of the fifth bravo, Cary delayed an instant longer. The iron bar was poised in his two hands. Just behind him moved a shadow. Suddenly he seemed to sense its presence. He stiffened and turned his head. It was a fraction of a second too late. A blow on the head stunned him. His eyes were filled with fire. His strength left him. He toppled forward with a groan. The iron bar clanged on the pavement.

As he fell, a knife was driven between his shoulder blades. He felt it sear like a red coal. A tremor passed through his mighty frame. Then he stretched prone and inanimate, an arm twisted under his head.

The only sound in the dark, narrow street was the pit-pat-pat of a man running away.

CHAPTER VI

THE TROUBLED HEART OF TERESA

Teresa Fernandez, the trim, immaculate stewardess, on her way to a passenger's room with a breakfast tray glanced into the dining-saloon. Richard Cary's chair was vacant. He had not yet come down. Usually he was punctual. It had been a pleasure to see him sitting there, so big and clean and wholesome, always good-humored, with a smile for every one. Teresa was disappointed at missing this first morning glimpse of him. It had not happened before.

She visited several staterooms and was blithe to the ladies who were too indolent to bestir themselves. Then the chief steward detained her with a list of the ship's laundry which required checking up. This meant an inspection of the shelves in the linen room. As soon as she was free, the stewardess hastened to the nook beside the stairway and the wicker chair, on the chance of intercepting Richard Cary.

Bad luck this time! He must have come and gone. His chair was empty. She went to the foot of the stairs and beckoned her friend, the second steward. Mr. Cary had not been down, he told her, nor had he ordered breakfast sent to his room. A hearty man who had never missed a meal before! Perhaps he felt under the weather. The climate of Cartagena was trying for a stranger, and Mr. Cary had worked all day in the sun. The amiable young second steward decided to find out for himself.

Teresa hovered near a doorway of the promenade deck.

She was anxious for Richard Cary's health, but it would not do to show it. She had been careless already, perhaps, in inviting gossip. It was unwise for a woman compelled to live in a ship. Busy-bodies were eager to carry tales to the captain's ears. The code of behavior was rigid and she had always avoided any appearance of fondness for a shipmate. She had treated them all alike and her record was clear of the breath of scandal.

When the second steward returned from his errand to the officers' quarters, his face told her that something was wrong. She was afraid to hear news of an illness. Her heart pounded. The words flew to her lips:

"Is it the fever? Has the doctor been up to see him?"

The second steward shook his head mysteriously. He motioned Teresa into the library where they could be alone. With an effort she masked her agitation. She could be a clever actress. Richard Cary was merely another friend of hers.

"Vamoosed! Flown away!" exclaimed the second steward. "Mr. Cary is not in the ship. His bed wasn't slept in last night, Miss Fernandez. He was supposed to go on watch at midnight. Now what do you think of that?"

"He is not in the ship?" she echoed, trying to keep her voice hushed. "Who told you so?"

"The third officer. A nice kid. He's all fussed up about it. Mr. Cary is a regular tin god to him. You know what the rest of 'em are saying. Mr. Cary hit the beach last night and got soused. His first trip down this way, and the Cartagena rum slipped one over on him. He'll turn up with a head on him before the ship sails. It will sure put him in wrong with the old man."

"Who dares say these wicked things?" blazed Teresa. "Mr. Cary is not a common sailor bum. Thank you very

much, Frank. If you find out any more, please come and tell me. It is very strange."

The second steward was inclined to linger and discuss it, but Teresa's manner dismissed him. She had no intention of betraying her emotions. This made it difficult to press her inquiries, to attempt to discover the facts in the case. Her head was throbbing. She felt tired. In order to be alone a few minutes she went to her room and bolted the door.

She had returned to the ship with Richard Cary before ten o'clock. He had said good-night at the gangway. A little later she had sent the deck steward to his room with the briar pipe. He had returned his thanks.

With a gesture of disgust she flung aside the theory that he might have sneaked ashore later for a quiet spree in Cartagena, wine and women, like so many of the men she had sailed with. Concerning the masculine sex she had few illusions left. Respectable shipmasters, passengers of pious repute at home, sporting young officers whose blood was hot, she had seen them yield to the lures of foreign ports.

Ah, thank God, Richard Cary was not that kind. In her eyes he was the perfect knight without fear and without reproach. It was now she realized how much she loved him, a love untarnished by the jealousies and suspicions that were native to her. Mere passion would have made her tremble with dreadful doubts that Don Ricardo had amused himself with her as a pastime and then had roved ashore to slake his desires with wanton girls.

Teresa wept a little, oppressed by the mystery of it, consumed by an anxiety that scorched her. Superstitious, she wished she had not let him touch the galleon's bell in the *patio* of Señor Ramon Bazán. Perhaps the bell was accursed, bringing misfortune as well as foretelling it. Then she courageously fought down her quaking trepidation and

wild fancies. Richard Cary was strong and unconquerable, a man to defy evil or disaster.

He was not in the ship. He had been absent most of the night. He had not slept in his room. Either he had gone ashore on some lawful business of his own, as an afterthought, or he had fallen overboard. Ridiculous, this! Teresa permitted herself a whimsical smile. It dimpled the corners of her mouth. *Valgame Dios*, he would have made a splash to awaken the whole harbor and make the ship rock at her moorings. Ha, ha, it would have made a tidal wave on the beach and floated the fishing boats into the streets.

Teresa Fernandez bathed her eyes, powdered her nose, smoothed her hair, and then emerged from her room. The ship was to sail at noon. Passengers from Cartagena were beginning to come on board — a rich Colombian family for the A suite, the mother very stout and overdressed, dapper father of a dusky complexion, a wailing baby, children of various sizes, a frightened nurse, innumerable parcels and bags. The stewardess was demanded to talk Spanish to them and bring order out of this domestic chaos.

As soon as possible, she ran on deck. Her eager vision searched the bridge, the cargo hatches, the wharf. The boyish third officer was at the gangway. She tried to speak casually.

"I heard Mr. Cary was missing. Has he come back yet?"

"Not a sign of him, Miss Fernandez. Darned if I know what to make of it. He was as steady as a clock. Reliable was his middle name. A quartermaster saw him leave the ship last night, about ten o'clock. The last he saw of Mr. Cary in the moonlight, he was walking into town. He didn't feel sleepy, I guess, and went out for a stroll. And then he fell off the earth."

"It is very, very queer, is it not?" sighed Teresa. "'Most twelve hours away from the ship! Has the captain tried to find him? Has he sent anybody into Cartagena? Has he 'phoned to the police?"

"Not that I know of," answered the third officer. He hesitated and looked to right and left before going on to say: "It's my notion that Captain Sterry won't look for him, from something I heard him spill to the first mate. There is some hard feeling between them, Miss Fernandez. I can't give you the dope on it, but the skipper doesn't seem a mite broken-hearted over leaving Mr. Cary behind. He hasn't lifted a finger to find him, as far as I can make out. It's a rotten situation, believe me."

"And you tell me the captain don't care what has happened to Mr. Cary?" breathed Teresa, aghast at this disclosure. "He will stand the second mate's watch on the run back to New York? I have been at sea as much as you, young man, and I give you my word this is too queer for me."

To desert the ship herself, to use her own intelligent energy in the quest of the missing man, this was Teresa's natural impulse. She knew Cartagena, on the surface intimately, beneath the surface by hearsay. It would be foolish, perhaps, to do such a thing until the very last moment. She would wait before making up her mind, wait until the whistle blew to cast off from the wharf.

Her superior officer, the chief steward, had seldom found fault with Miss Fernandez, but now he noticed her frequent tours on deck and the interruptions in her routine of duty. He was a fat Swiss who perspired copiously and eternally prowled through the kitchens, the pantries, the corridors in search of delinquencies. A pudgy finger beckoned the stewardess, and a hoarse voice barked:

"Miss Fernandez, I haf got to call you down. You vill lose your job mit me if you don't mind it better. Vat is all dis rubberin' and beatin' it upstairs and down again? Here is dot woman in number seventeen ringin' like hell and tellin' her cabin steward she can't get you."

"That woman in seventeen ought to be poisoned, Mr. Schwartz," sniffed Teresa. "All she does is eat, eat. I know what she wants now, orange juice and biscuit and a little fruit. My gracious, for breakfast I took that woman a cereal, a melon, bacon and eggs, fish, fried potatoes, and a stack of toast. She is suffering with a nervous breakdown and must be careful of herself, she tells me. You let her ring is my advice, Mr. Schwartz."

The chief steward mopped his dripping jowls and sulkily retorted: "Dot woman pays big money for the cruise, a room mit bath, Miss Fernandez. Go chase yourself on the job, and no more runnin' all over the ship like a crazy girl. Vas you smugglin' or somethings? You mind your step. I can get plenty of goot stewardesses in New York for the *Tarragona*."

Teresa's white teeth closed over her lower lip. She detested this puffy swine who was in a position to bully her. He saw the temper flare in her black eyes and awaited the explosion. To his surprise she held herself in check. Her voice was almost indifferent as she replied:

"Yes, Mr. Schwartz. I will do as you say. I am feeling nervous this morning, not very well. I need to go on deck to get the air. But you will not have to scold me again."

The stewardess hurried away. Mr. Schwartz gazed after her and sopped his bulging neck. The moods of Miss Fernandez were beyond him. Competent as she was, he would have preferred a Swiss or German woman. These Spanish girls were flighty. You couldn't keep up mit 'em.

A few minutes later Teresa whisked into the passage leading to the room of Mr. McClement, the sagacious chief engineer. Here was a world secluded from the passenger quarters, a grimy, hard-working world in which moved scantily clad men with towels thrown over their shoulders. Teresa was safe from the espionage of the apoplectic chief steward. She rapped on a door which was opened by Mr. McClement, whose lean, freckled countenance was white with lather. He waved a razor in a gesture of cordial invitation.

Teresa entered. He removed a disorderly heap of books and clothing from a chair and offered no apologies.

"Just came out of the shower and was shifting into fresh duds," he explained. "Been taking one of those condemned winches to pieces. The misbegotten machines go wrong every voyage. What can you expect, though, with these nigger donkeymen we pick up from port to port? I wanted to take a turn ashore, but couldn't get off sooner. It is Dick Cary, of course. Where the deuce is he? Any theories to offer, Miss Fernandez?"

"Nothing at all, Mr. McClement. Not one thing at all," she said, no longer trying to hide what she felt. "You are his best friend in the ship and — and he is a friend of mine, too. You know. You are so wise that it is no use fooling you."

"I shouldn't say that the large and ingenuous Cary had baffled my perceptions," was the dry comment. "When I last saw him he was wearing his heart on his sleeve. God made him that way. The bigger they are the harder they fall."

"And you honestly think he fell for me?" cried Teresa, with her most enchanting smile. It was like a flash of sunshine in a rifted cloud.

"His symptoms convinced me, Miss Fernandez. Humph! This pleases you, I see, but it gets us nowhere. Well, he didn't go ashore to pull the town to pieces. I know him better than that. The captain makes that excuse for leaving him adrift."

"You believe in Mr. Cary, just as I do? Ah, I could kiss you for that. I have heard those horrid lies on deck —"

"Pardon me, while I remove this lather, and perhaps you can find a dry spot," he interrupted. "A kiss from you would be a noteworthy event in the somber chronicle of existence."

"For shame, Mr. McClement. How can you joke with me?"

"Very well, then. In all seriousness, I am as uneasy about Cary as you are. I still take it for granted that he will turn up with some perfectly good alibi. This feeling is, I presume, because he is such a husky, two-fisted beggar with a level head on his shoulders. No greenhorn, either — accustomed to knocking about strange ports at all hours. But, confound him, he hasn't turned up. You can't get away from that, can you? And I don't know where to look if I go buzzing around Cartagena for the hour or two before the ship sails. I did call up the central police office soon after breakfast. My Spanish is bad and a congenital idiot was on the other end of the line. I got nothing at all."

"These police of Cartagena," sighed Teresa. "They are a bunch of nuts."

"Rather well put," agreed McClement, who was no stranger to the Spanish Main.

"Is there anybody that hates Mr. Cary?" she asked, expressing the fear that had been lurking in her troubled soul. "I am foolish, maybe, but I cannot make myself forget that Colonel Fajardo. I dreamed about him last night,

a terrible dream. I woke up crying. Do you believe in dreams, Mr. McClement?"

"In this instance I don't really have to," said he, rather glad to have her broach this sinister topic. He had been reluctant to alarm her.

"Then you know something about this Colonel Fajardo that is not a dream?" exclaimed Teresa. "It has to do with Mr. Cary?"

"Possibly. You are a sensible young woman, in spots, Miss Fernandez. And I can't imagine your kicking your heels in hysterics. Besides, my room is too cluttered up for that sort of thing. I warned Cary yesterday afternoon to keep a weather eye lifted for this saturnine *Comandante* of the Port. He was drinking hard and the liquor seemed to make him wicked instead of drunk. You know what I mean? I got the impression that he had a provocation. You threw him over, I believe. I was looking on, last voyage and this. The emotions of Colonel Fajardo were quite obvious."

"I should say so," exclaimed Teresa. "The whole ship knew he was daffy about me. And he is now jealous of Mr. Cary? He has plenty of reason to be so. I am proud to say it to *you*, Mr. McClement, that Richard Cary is much more to me than my life. You are his friend and I can tell you."

"Mutual, I should say," was the comment. "You bowled him clean off his pins. The splendor of youth and romance! I am envious. It seems a frightful pity to upset you, my dear girl, but I do suspect this Fajardo blackguard. Cary laughed at me. Piffle, melodrama, and all that."

"Yes, Mr. McClement, he would laugh. But I saw how that Colonel Fajardo looked at me when I told him I would

not marry him. I swear to you, I crossed myself and said my prayers. And I saw him looking at Mr. Cary. Ah, now you understand why I had awful dreams last night."

"Hum-m, and he saw you go ashore with Cary in the evening, Miss Fernandez. I noticed him stalking about and muttering to himself. He left the ship soon after that."

"Ah, I believe it was a dream to warn me," murmured Teresa, "but it was too late to save Mr. Cary."

"Oh, I won't say it is as bad as all that. I'll toddle ashore right away and have a look around. Ten to one Dick Cary will come galloping aboard just before the whistle blows, as fresh as paint and with some extraordinary yarn or other."

"You wish to jolly poor Teresa Fernandez," said she. "Are you sure the captain will not help to find him?"

"Rather! Cary was unlucky enough to puncture his self-esteem, a most painful wound. It was the plump flapper with the bobbed hair — Captain Sterry was on the bridge with her — Cary snickered. And there you are. One of those momentous trifles. Life is like that."

"I know," said Teresa. "Captain Sterry is mushy sometimes. I have seen it with some other young girls. I know men pretty well. That was enough to queer Mr. Cary, all right. Well, Mr. McClement, I must go back to my job. You will tell me, if you find out anything?"

"Like a shot. Cary is not going to lose *you* if he can help it. Remember that. You can gamble on him to break out of almost any kind of a jam he gets into. I hope to God you and I are a pair of false alarms."

Teresa had no more to say. The chief engineer was inserting the buttons in the cuffs of a fresh shirt. She walked slowly along the passage, scarcely seeing where she

went. Richard Cary was dead. She said the words to herself. They hammered in her brain, over and over again, like the strokes of the galleon's bell. No other reason accounted for his disappearance.

The air in the passage reeked with steam and oil. It was also intensely hot. She felt faint. Steadying herself, she opened a door to the lower deck. She leaned on the railing and stared at the blue harbor and the dazzling sea beyond. A slight breeze fanned her cheek. The vitality returned to her lithe and slender body. This was no time to be weak, to play the coward. She had never flinched from life. It was something to be a Fernandez of Cartagena. They had never whimpered when they held the losing cards.

Mr. Schwartz, the corpulent chief steward, prowling in search of whom he might annoy, discovered her at the railing. He began to growl, noticed her pallor, and changed his tune to say:

"You haf a sick feeling, Miss Fernandez? You look like you vas all in. Why didn't you told me so? You go lay down. Let 'em holler. I vill be the sweet leetle stewardess for an hour or so."

"I am not sick, Mr. Schwartz," she gratefully assured him. "Dizzy, a little bit. I will go sit in my wicker chair till somebody rings."

He grunted, slapped her on the shoulder with a sticky paw, and lumbered off to find victims more deserving of his wrath. Before sitting down to rest, Teresa wearily climbed to the promenade deck.

She was in time to see Colonel Fajardo ascend the gangway steps. His demeanor was haughty and dignified. The lines in his harsh face seemed to be graven a little deeper, its expression more predatory than usual. He was puffy under the eyes. A nervous twitching affected his upper lip.

It was the morning after. Whiskey and cognac had not been good even for a man of blood and iron, a man with a copper lining.

It was unusual for him to come to the wharf so late on sailing day. He made some suave explanation to Captain Sterry who happened to meet him on deck. Teresa Fernandez stood watching them. She was tensely observant. Would she be able to read the soul of Colonel Fajardo? She must try. It was a throw of the dice. He was striding toward the smoking-room when she accosted him in Spanish:

"Pardon, Colonel Fajardo. You omit to say good-morning to me. Am I no longer the lovely flower of Cartagena?"

"*Car-r-amba!* I am as blind as an owl, not to see the adorable Teresa," he jauntily responded. "You were shy, my little one. Not so much like the rose to-day. White like the lily, but no less beautiful."

"A tongue as ready as his sword," smiled Teresa. "What a devil with the women! Have you heard? The second officer of the ship cannot be found. It is sensational. In our peaceful, sleepy Cartagena of all places, where there are no wicked people to molest a sailor ashore!"

"Very true, señorita," he gravely returned. "I am amazed. Captain Sterry mentioned the matter just now — the big second mate with the yellow hair. Not so easy to mislay him, by the Apostles. A dear friend of yours, too! It is distressing, and I sympathize with all my soul. Alas, I am in darkness, with no information for you. And the ship sails in two hours. It will be an unhappy voyage — for the friends of the deserter, Second Officer Cary."

"Not a deserter, Colonel Fajardo," she protested, very careful of her words and icily restrained. "You are, of

course, acquainted with the chief of the municipal police. He is your brother-in-law? If a ship's officer was in trouble, it would be reported to you as *Comandante* of the Port?"

"Doubtless I should hear of it, my lovely one," he gravely assured her. "This man you speak of may have fled from Cartagena by night. Possibly he had planned to escape into hiding in order to avoid the consequences of some crime committed elsewhere. Has this occurred to you?"

"No, I am a stupid woman," said Teresa. "A thousand thanks, Colonel Fajardo."

"Permit me to kiss your hand, Señorita Fernandez. It is my condolence, my feeling of pity for you, to lose such a friend as the valiant, the enormous, the sentimental Señor Cary. Would that I might lighten your sorrow."

She snatched her hand away and regarded him with a steadfast and penetrating scrutiny. His voice had held a note of flagrant mockery. Her ear was quick to detect it. His gloating smile also betrayed him. Yes, she was looking into his soul. It was like the gift of second sight. What she saw there made her shiver. Unwittingly he had made confession. Teresa Fernandez knew. His guilt had ceased to be a torturing surmise.

She let him pass into the smoking-room. Then she went down to her own stateroom. As she entered it, the faint sound of the ship's bell on the bridge came thin and metallic. *Ting, ting — ting, ting!* Four bells! Ten o'clock! Two hours until sailing time. It was useless to wait and hope for Richard Cary to return at the last moment. Teresa was now convinced of this.

For some time she sat lost in thought. To a knock on the door she paid no heed. She was quite calm. The only sign of nervousness was the pit-pat-pat of one little white shoe

on the rug. She rose and looked in the mirror. What she saw was unlike the bonny Teresa Fernandez with the red lips, the warm tint in the olive cheek, the eyes that had shone with the joy of living only yesterday. All expression seemed to have been ironed from her face. It was blank and very solemn.

She lifted a rosary from the nail where it hung at the head of her bed. She fingered the beads. Her lips moved. Then she placed the rosary around her neck, underneath the plain white shirt-waist of her stewardess's garb. There was no indecision, no struggle.

Presently she opened a drawer at the bottom of the closet and held up a wooden box. In it was an automatic pistol, so small that she could almost hide it in her hand. It had been advisable to have the little pistol with her when ashore at night in seaports where the streets led through the haunts of rough men.

She slipped it into the pocket of the white apron. She would deal out justice, if needs be, and willingly pay the price as became a woman who had loved and lost, who was a Fernandez of Cartagena.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN WHO LIED

These last hours before the sailing of the *Tarragona* made the indolent wharf bestir itself against its inclination. It was a pity to disturb the tranquil noontide when all Cartagena closed the shutters and went to sleep. In its baking, quivering streets the proverbial pin would have dropped with a loud report. However, for every departing passenger many friends exerted themselves to go down to the steamer, even though the voyage might be no farther away than Santa Marta or Porto Colombia. The promenade deck was like the stage of an opera, tears, embraces, perfervid dialogue, animated choruses surrounding the actors.

The railroad whose tracks ran out upon the wharf shared this intense excitement. Belated freight cars filled with hides and sacks of coffee came rolling down in frantic haste. It was always that way, a general air of surprise, almost of consternation, that the steamer actually proposed to sail on time instead of *mañana*. Why, she was mad enough to leave passengers, influential people of Colombia, and heaps of coffee and hides, even if they were only a few hours late. It was discourteous, to say the least.

Amid this confusion and noise, Colonel Fajardo moved like an imperious dictator. He was unmistakably the *Comandante* of the Port. Thievish idlers fled from the gaunt figure in the uniform of white with the medals and gold stripes. A scowl and a curse, and the traffic untangled itself to let a porter pass with a trunk on his back or an

American tourist buying a green parakeet and the beaded bags woven by the Indian women.

Teresa Fernandez desired another interview with Colonel Fajardo. It was imperative. To make a scene on board the ship, however, was repugnant to her sense of decorum, of her fidelity to the Company's service. This difficulty perplexed her. She was jealous of the ship's good name. She was a deep-water sailor with a sailor's loyalties and affections for the ships she served in.

Her eyes followed the movements of Colonel Fajardo who found much to do on the wharf. She had certain questions to ask him. Liar that he was, the odds were all against his answering anything truly, but the chance would be offered him. Justice demanded it. Intently she watched him as he stalked to and fro. She was singularly unmoved by impatience. What was destined to happen would happen.

No longer did her gaze, questing and wistful, turn landward in the hope of seeing Richard Cary come back to the *Tarragona*. There was no such thing as hope.

The cargo sheds extended almost the length of the wharf. Between them and the ship were the railroad tracks and the entrance from the custom-house gate. On the farther side of the cargo sheds was a narrow strip of wharf where smaller vessels could tie up, mostly Colombian sailing craft that traded with the villages on the lagoon or made short trips coastwise. Just now the graceful masts of one schooner lifted above the roofs of the sheds.

It did not escape Teresa's notice when Colonel Fajardo passed around the outer end of the cargo sheds to the narrow strip of wharf behind them. He was screened from the sight of the ship; also from the laborers at the freight cars and the hoisting tackle. He had betaken himself into a

certain seclusion which offered Teresa the opportunity she craved.

Unheeded she tripped down to the wharf. It was usual for her to pass to and fro on farewell errands, perhaps to purchase curios for the ladies who were unable to bargain in Spanish. And there were always friends, residents of Cartagena, with whom she enjoyed exchanging greetings. The sailing hour was likely to be a gala time for Señorita Teresa Fernandez. She was the most popular stewardess of the steamers in this service.

Slipping aside, she followed Colonel Fajardo around the outer end of the long cargo shed. He had been on the deck of the Colombian schooner alongside and was just stepping back to the string-piece of the wharf. Evidently he had found no one in the schooner. Whatever the purpose of his visit may have been, it was banished from his mind by the sight of Teresa Fernandez. He appeared startled.

Walking a little way along the edge of the wharf, he was abreast of the schooner's stern when Teresa confronted him. He halted there, lifted his cap with an elaborate flourish, and signified that he could not be detained. Teresa put a hand in the pocket of her apron. She kept it there while she said:

"Please do not move, Colonel Fajardo. It will be unfortunate for your health. I am so glad that you came to this quiet spot where we are not interrupted. I could not sail without giving myself the pleasure of saying adieu. The other side of the wharf is so crowded, so conspicuous."

He was not deceived into surmising that this desirable woman had repented of her coldness. It was no coquetry. Her voice had a biting edge. Her face was even whiter than when he had met her on deck. Uneasily he glanced behind him and then over her shoulder. They were alone and un-

observed. The Colombian schooner, her crew ashore, rocked gently at its mooring lines. Beyond it was a wide stretch of azure harbor upon which nothing moved except a far distant canoe as tiny as a water bug. Between this strip of wharf and the shore was a high wooden barrier with a closed gate. It was a curious isolation, with so much life and motion on the other side of the cargo sheds, only a few yards away.

Colonel Fajardo bared his teeth in a forced smile as he said:

"As I remember, señorita, you were not so anxious for the pleasure of my company yesterday. I am, indeed, flattered to have you seek me out for an adieu, but I must return to my duties. The *Tarragona* will soon blow her whistle. Have you anything of importance to say before you sail?"

Teresa removed her hand from the pocket of the white apron. Her hand almost covered the little automatic pistol. The colonel caught a glimpse of it, this object of blued steel with a round orifice no bigger than a pill. He was still standing close to the edge of the wharf. Astonished, he almost lost his balance. Recovering himself, he snatched at Teresa's hand. She eluded him with a quick backward step.

The pistol was aimed straight at the belt of Colonel Fajardo. He stood rigid, his posture that of a man mysteriously bereft of volition. Carefully Teresa lowered her hand until the pistol nestled in the pocket of her apron, concealed from view, but the short barrel bulged the white fabric. It was still pointed at the middle of Colonel Fajardo. Instinctively he flattened his stomach until it was like a board. He had a shrinking feeling in that region, like that of a man who has fasted many days.

Thus they stood facing each other in a tableau as still as a picture. When Teresa Fernandez spoke, it was not loudly, but her voice vibrated like a bell.

"Place your hands on your hips, outside your coat, Colonel Fajardo. And be careful to keep them so. Your own pistol is in a holster inside your coat. I have noticed it there. It will be unwise for you to try to get it."

Her captive's gaze was wild and roving. He dared not cry out. This hell-begotten woman carried death in a touch of her finger. Lunacy afflicted her. It was a predicament for such a man as himself, a situation incredibly fantastic. His gaze returned to her face, and also to that little bulge in the pocket of her apron. It gave him the effect of being cross-eyed. The nervous twitching of his upper lip was like a grimace. He was grotesque.

Teresa Fernandez had no time to waste. She asked, peremptorily: "Where is the second officer of the *Tarragona?* What misfortune occurred to Señor Cary in Cartagena last night? The truth, Colonel Fajardo, or, as God beholds me, I shall have to kill you."

He could not make himself believe that the game was up. He had twisted out of many a tight corner. It was impossible for him to conceive of being beaten by a woman. He would endeavor to cajole this one, to play for time. Her nerves would presently break under the strain. He was watching her like a cat. Let her waver for an instant and he would pounce. He answered her questions in the earnest tones of a man who lived on intimate terms with truth.

"By the holy spirit of my dead mother, señorita, your words are like the blank wall of the shed yonder. They mean nothing. You have deluded yourself. Some malicious person in the ship must have led your mind astray. I have made enemies. Why not? It is evidence of my integrity

and courage. What is this big second officer of the *Tarragona* to me? I have not even spoken to the man. He is a stranger."

Teresa's hand moved slightly in the pocket of her apron. The little bulge indicated that the orifice of the pistol was pointed somewhat higher than the colonel's belt. He perceived this. His two hands rested upon his hips, outside the coat. They seemed to have been glued there. His leathery cheek blanched to a dirty hue. He swallowed with an effort. The cords stood out on his neck.

Solemnly Teresa Fernandez framed her accusation in words: "You have killed Señor Ricardo Cary. You yourself, Colonel Fajardo, or more likely by the hands of others. If you are ready to confess it, I will permit the Government of Cartagena to decree the punishment. It will be left to the law and the courts. Do you confess?"

"Confess to what, my little one?" he blurted, with a touch of the old bravado. "Careful! You are in a strange frenzy, and that pistol may explode before you know it."

"I will know it," said Teresa, "and you will know it, Colonel Fajardo. I am familiar with the little pistol. For the last time, are you a guilty or an innocent man?"

"As innocent as the Holy Ghost —" he protested, but his voice stuck in his throat, for he read death in the girl's unflinching glance. Desperately he attempted to snatch at the holster on his hip, with one swift motion to take her by surprise and slay her where she stood. It was instinctive, like the leap of a trapped wolf.

Teresa read his sinister purpose. If he was swift, she was the swifter. She raised her hand from the pocket of her apron. It paused for a small fraction of a second and almost touched a bit of red ribbon attached to a medal on

the left breast of Colonel Fajardo's handsome white coat. He stammered thickly:

"Ah, wait — wretched slut of a woman — Jesus, have mercy — oh, oh, my heart — may you roast in hell —"

The report of Teresa's pistol had been no louder than the crack of a whip. One report, no more. When a bullet had drilled clean through a man's heart, it was unnecessary to fire again.

Colonel Fajardo's hands flew from his hips. They were beating the air. His mouth was slack, like that of an idiot. He blinked as if immensely bewildered. His chin fell forward. His body swayed tipsily. Teresa stood waiting, her left hand clasped to her bosom. It was the end. She had seen death come by violence to men on shipboard.

The unforeseen occurred when Colonel Fajardo, swaying and sagging, tottered backward and disappeared. He had been standing close to the edge of the wharf. His fingers clawed the empty air as he plunged downward, barely clearing the overhanging stern of the Colombian schooner.

Teresa laid hold of a piling and stared down at a patch of frothy water. Small waves ran away from it in widening circles. They lapped against the schooner's rudder. Nothing else was visible. Presently, however, a huge black fin, triangular, sheared the surface like a blade. Another like it glistened and vanished. There was the sheen of white bellies as the greedy sharks of Cartagena harbor swirled downward into the green water.

Teresa Fernandez averted her eyes. The body of Colonel Fajardo would never be seen again. He was obliterated. She let the pistol fall through a crack between the planks of the wharf. Then she walked to the side of the cargo shed and leaned against a timber. She had pictured herself as

almost instantly discovered and seized, the body of Colonel Fajardo lying upon the wharf. For this she had prepared herself. She had been willing to pay the price.

Now she realized that her deed was undiscovered. The isolation was unbroken. The harsh commotion of the ship's winches, the rattle of the freight cars as the switching engine bumped them about, the yells of the Colombian stevedores, had made the whip-like report of the pistol inaudible. And the whole thing had been so quickly done. Perhaps two or three minutes she had stood there and talked with Colonel Fajardo.

A revulsion of feeling shook the soul of Teresa Fernandez. Why should she suffer bitter shame and die in expiation of a righteous act? It was no crime in her sight. She had administered justice because otherwise it would have been forever thwarted. And, in the last resort, had she not fired the little pistol in self-defense? These thoughts raced through her brain during the moments while she leaned against the timber of the cargo shed.

She mustered strength. Her knees ceased trembling. A hint of color returned to her olive cheek. Her lips were not so bloodless. Head erect, she walked along the narrow strip of wharf, but not to pass around the outer end of the shed. Instead of this, she sought the shoreward exit through the high wooden barrier. The gate was fastened, she found, but another way of escape led through an empty room in which baggage was sometimes stored for examination. She passed through this room and emerged on the railroad tracks.

Between two freight cars she made her way and so to the custom-house gate and the main entrance from the open square beyond. In a shady spot squatted an Indian woman with beaded bags displayed on her lap. Another drowsed

beside a pile of grass baskets. Teresa paused to buy two beaded bags and a basket.

Just then a carriage dashed into the open square. A portly Colombian gentleman and his wife called out cordial salutations to Señorita Fernandez. A small boy fairly wriggled with joy as he flew out of the carriage to fling both arms around the waist of the stewardess of the *Tarragona.*

She welcomed them gayly. They had made the southward voyage with her several months earlier, *en route* to their home in Bogotá. Teresa walked back to the ship with them, the small boy clinging to her hand and piping excitedly in Spanish. Would she show him again how to play those wonderful games of cards? He had forgotten some of them. And the story of the jaguar that sat on the roof of the peon's hut and clawed a hole through the thatch and tumbled right in?

Yes, Teresa would tell him all the tales she could remember. There would be plenty of time during the voyage to New York. In this manner the stewardess returned to the ship, beaded bags and grass basket on one arm, the happy urchin from Bogotá clinging to the other. The youthful third officer was at the gangway. He halted her to say:

"Nothing doing. Not a sign of Mr. Cary. The chief engineer drove into town. He may dig up a clue, but I doubt it."

"Mr. McClement is a sharp one," said she, "but the time is too short."

"Sure! It seems as if that chesty gink, Colonel Fajardo, might have helped. He ought to be wise to what goes on in Cartagena."

"Ah, yes, it would seem so," said Teresa as she stepped on board the ship. She found the staterooms of the family

from Bogotá and saw that nothing was lacking for their comfort. Then she proceeded to her own room, but not for long. She washed her hands, scrubbing them with particular care. In a way, it was a symbol. Then she put on a fresh apron. The one she had worn on the wharf was wrinkled. The pocket showed a small stain of oil where the little pistol had nestled.

A few minutes later she met the chief steward in the corridor. He detained her to rumble:

"You haf tooken my advice, Miss Fernandez, and laid off a leetle while? Now go chase yourself on the job."

"All right, Mr. Schwartz. I will make myself pleasant to that cranky woman in seventeen."

Teresa went and knocked at the stateroom door. A querulous voice said, "Come in." The woman curled up on the divan, under the electric fan, was not much older than Teresa, but she looked faded and unlovely. Rouge and lip-stick simulated a vanished bloom. An empty cocktail glass was at her elbow. An ash tray reeked with dead cigarettes.

"For God's sake, Miss Fernandez, is the ship ever going to leave this beastly hole?" she complained. "I'm dying with the heat and bored sick. Rub some of that bay rum on my head. It feels as if the top would fly off."

"Yes, madam. It will be cooler soon, when we get out of the harbor. Cartagena is always hot in the middle of the day."

"Hot? You said something. And stupid! I didn't mind the cruise until we tied up to this dump. A fool doctor shoved me off on a sea voyage, and my husband couldn't leave his business. It was wished on me, all right."

"Cartagena is very beautiful, so many people think," ventured Teresa.

"Huh, they must be dead ones. Nothing has happened here in three hundred years. I'll bet you couldn't wake it up with a ton of dynamite. How did you ever stand living here? You seem to have some pep. Got it in little old New York, I'll bet."

"Perhaps, madam. New York is a live one."

"Right-o. That's where you get action. No Rip Van Winkle stuff. You can always start something. These Colombians? Dead on their feet — asleep at the switch."

"I am a Colombian, madam," smiled Teresa, an absent look in her eyes. "Yes, nothing ever happens in Cartagena. It is stupid and asleep. Nobody could start anything at all."

Deftly the stewardess ministered to the aching head of the woman in seventeen, soothing her with a murmurous, agreeable flow of talk. The steamer blew three long, strident blasts. Teresa excused herself and hastened on deck. The *Tarragona* was moving slowly away from the wharf. Presently she swung to traverse the wide lagoon and so reach the open sea through the narrow fairway of the Boca Chica.

The swell of the Caribbean was cradling the steamer when Teresa Fernandez found time to rest in the wicker chair beside the staircase. She gazed into the dining-saloon. At a small table in a corner sat a wireless operator and the assistant purser. Between them was an empty chair. Teresa sighed and closed her eyes. She would move her wicker chair to another place. She did not wish to see the second officer's empty chair.

Late in the afternoon she met the chief engineer on deck. In spotless white clothes he strolled with hands clasped behind him, alone as usual, a lean, abstracted figure. He paused to stand at the rail beside the stewardess.

At first they found nothing to say. They were staring at the roseate, misty city of Cartagena. It seemed to rise from the sea and float like a mirage. The surf flashed white against the wall of enduring masonry that marched around this ancient stronghold of the *conquistadores*. Teresa Fernandez said in a low voice:

"Do you understand what Mr. Cary meant when he talked about the Cartagena of ages and ages ago, as if he had really been there? He is dead, I know, but it seems to me that he must be alive, that he will always be alive in Cartagena."

"It was a romantic obsession of his, Miss Fernandez. By the way, did you say anything to Colonel Fajardo? I fancied you might have given him the third degree, after the session in my room. I found out nothing when I drove into town. It was a gesture, as you might say. I had to be doing something."

"I asked him very straight, Mr. McClement," replied Teresa, her eyes meeting his. "He swore he had nothing to tell me."

"Humph! Then I'm afraid we can never find out."

McClement resumed his stroll. More than once he glanced at Teresa still lingering at the rail and looking at distant Cartagena, now a vanishing vision. The chief engineer shook his head. The expression of his intelligent and reflective face was inscrutable. To himself he muttered:

"But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And if they think, they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts."

CHAPTER VIII

UPON THE CITY WALL

The prison of Cartagena consisted of a long row of arched, tomb-like apartments built against the inside of the city wall. Two centuries earlier, this series of stone caverns had been the barracks of the Spanish troops who had defended this treasure port against one furious assault after another. Here was a prison likely to hold the most desperate malefactor. Only an earthquake could have weakened such masonry as this.

Upon a cot in one of these gloomy rooms lay stretched the body of a young man of heroic proportions. He was not a native. The fair skin and yellow hair were alien to the coasts of the Caribbean. His hairy chest was bare. Around it was bound a strip of cloth as a hasty bandage. His head was half-swathed in other folds of cloth. It was perplexing to know whether he was alive or dead.

The door faced a small open yard in which was a rude shelter from the sun, a shack knocked together of poles and boards. It had a covered porch in which hammocks were slung. A Colombian soldier lolled in one of them. Two others squatted on the floor and languidly shook a leather dice-box. They were small, coffee-colored men wearing coarse straw hats and uniforms of blue cotton drilling much faded. Their rifles leaned against a plank table littered with dirty dishes and black with flies.

The soldier in the hammock was a corporal. He aroused himself to scuffle to an iron door and peer in at the silent figure upon the cot. It had not moved. A waste of time to have washed and bandaged this murderous prisoner. Now

these poor soldiers would be put to the trouble of digging a grave, and such a devil of a big grave! The two privates, Francisco and Manuel, were shaking the dice to see who should wield the accursed shovel.

The corporal yawned and loafed back to the hammock to rest. The journey of a few yards to the iron door had fatigued him. The trio chewed sugar-cane and lazily discussed the huge *Americano*, a most uncommon fish to be landed in their net. Alive and vigorous, he would be most dangerous. It would be as much as a man's life was worth to enter his cell. Fortunately he had been hit on the head and stabbed in the back when discovered in a street not far from the little plaza of the Church of San Pedro Clavér.

He had run amuck, *loco* with rum, not much doubt of that. He had attacked as many as five young men of Cartagena, a serenading party innocently singing and playing the guitar. He had broken the necks of two and smashed the shoulder of another. Like a flail he had swung an iron bar actually plucked from a window with the strength of a giant and the fury of a madman.

By chance, the *Comandante* of the Port, the famous Colonel Fajardo, walking home from the Café Dos Hermanos, had discovered the body of the *Americano* and his victims, a sight to wonder at in that respectable street of peaceful Cartagena. Colonel Fajardo had summoned the police. They had decided to keep the matter hushed until they could investigate. They had been annoyed to find a little life in him. Such a man was better dead. He was unknown to the police. Perhaps a sailor from a ship or one of those red-faced, hard-fisted Yankee foremen from the gold mines of the Magdalena.

It had been advisable to put him in the prison instead of the hospital. Think what he had done! Tried to kill five

young men because he disliked the way they sang and played the guitar!

Richard Cary was not quite so near burial as they took for granted. His breath so faint that it would scarcely have fogged a mirror, he had remained in the black realm of unconsciousness until now. The return to life was blurred and glimmering, like a feeble light in this profound darkness. It refused to be snuffed out. At first like a mere spark, to his stupefied senses it seemed to become hotter and hotter until it glowed like a coal, burning inside his head and torturing him.

He did not try to move, but lay wondering why these fiery pains should dart and flicker through his brain. He raised his leaden eyelids and dimly, waveringly perceived the arched stone ceiling blotched with dampness. It was like a dungeon. Were these merely things he had read of in books that shocked and quickened the mysterious process of his awakening? His groping mind was ablaze with illusions which seemed intensely actual. Tenaciously he endeavored to banish them, but they poignantly persisted. The sweat ran down his face. He groaned aloud. Spasms of alarm shook him.

Was this a dungeon of the Holy Office of the Inquisition? The cord was already twisted around his temples. His head was almost bursting. The stake and the fagot were waiting for him in the courtyard. Such had been the cruel fate of many a stout seaman of Devon — burly James Bitfield twice racked and enduring the water torment until death eased him — young Bailey Vaughan slashed with two hundred stripes in the market-place and enslaved in the galleys for seven years — gray-haired John Carelesse dying of the *strappado*, the pulley that wrenched joint and sinew asunder.

The pains in his head were intolerable. The yellow-robed agents of the Holy Office were twisting the cord tighter, to bite into his skull. By God, they could never make him recant like a whining cur and a traitor to his faith. The torture of the cord wasn't enough for them. The fiends were pressing the red-hot iron to his back, between the shoulder blades.

It was the agony of these hallucinations that roused him out of his coma, that held him from slipping back into the dark gulf. One hand moved and clenched the frame of the cot. His eyes remained open and wandered from the gray stone arch above his head. His chest rose and fell in normal suspiration. Mistily he recognized himself as the Richard Cary who was the second officer of the *Tarragona.* Cartagena in the moonlight and Teresa Fernandez — a galleon's bell that foretold disaster, *dong, dong — dong, dong* — the twang and tinkle of a guitar, of an ominous guitar.

He had been knocked out? Well, it was a mighty hard head to break. Solid above the ears, his young brother Bill had delicately hinted. The pain was terrific, but this didn't necessarily mean a crack in it. That head had been banged before now.

Stabbed in the back, besides! That was more serious. It ought to have finished him. Such had been the bravo's intention. But he had never thrust a knife into a back as broad and deep as this, with such thick ridges of muscles that overlaid it like armor. Also, in the flurry of haste, he may have driven the blade aslant.

Anxiously Richard Cary drew in his breath and expelled it. He concluded that his lungs were undamaged. That his heart was still beating proved that the knife had missed a vital part. A deep flesh wound and muscles that throbbed and burned! So much for that.

He was alive and not mortally hurt. He felt hazily thankful. This stone kennel was too much like a prison cell to be anything else. A rotten deal, to throw a man in jail after failing to kill him. This seemed like the fine hand of Colonel Fajardo. It was one way to finish the job. His five bravos had made a mess of it.

His disordered mind fitfully clearing, Richard Cary became aware of the one thing of supreme importance. His ship was to sail at noon. He fumbled in the pockets of his torn trousers. His watch and money were gone. What hour of the day was it now? He rolled his head and blinked at the little window set in the iron door. The sunlight blazed like a furnace in the yard outside. It was the breathless heat and brightness that smote the city near the middle of the day. Perhaps it was not yet noon.

His first voyage in the *Tarragona* and logged as a deserter? An officer who had earned promotion on his merits in the hard schooling of the North Atlantic trade? It was an imperative obligation to return to the ship. Had Captain Sterry made an effort to find him? Perhaps not. Good riddance might be his feeling in the matter. An official word from the Union Fruit Company would have set powerful influences at work in Cartagena. Political connections safeguarded its vast commercial interests on the Colombian coast. The inference was that Captain Sterry had been willing to let his too candid second mate go adrift.

The hope of getting back to the ship was another delusion. This the battered man on the cot presently realized. He was buried alive in this stone vault of a prison and lacked strength even to lift his head. Tears of weakness filled his eyes. He felt profound pity for himself. He was a forlorn derelict on a lee shore.

Soon, however, the sweat dried on his face. His skin

grew dry and hot. His heart was beating faster. The burning sensation in his head was diffusing itself through his body. The air of the room was more stifling than ever. It was like a furnace. Strange, but he felt less inert, not so helpless to move. He was dizzy, light-headed, but this was preferable to the incessant waves of pain. He did not know that fever was taking hold of him. He mistook it for a resurgence of his tremendous vitality, evidence that he could pull himself together and break the bonds of his weakness.

He lay motionless, waiting, trying to think coherently, while the fever raced through his veins. He seemed to be floating off into space. The sensations were agreeable. No longer sorry for himself, he was unafraid of any odds. Keep him in a Cartagena jail? Nonsense. All he had to do was to use his wits. He laughed to himself, but he was careful to lock his lips. Not a sound escaped him. He was wary and cunning.

The Colombian corporal of the guard decided to pry himself from the hammock and ascertain whether the big *Americano* was dead by this time. Instead of peering through the window, the corporal thought best to make a closer investigation. He was impatient with this prisoner who had stubbornly refused to become a corpse. A clumsy iron key squeaked in the rusty lock of the door. The corporal walked in and stooped over the cot.

Yes, the *Americano* had about finished with the business of living. A hand held over his mouth detected no breath at all. The corporal was about to shift his hand to the naked chest to discover if the heart had ceased to beat.

Two mighty arms flew up. One of them wrapped itself around the corporal's neck and pulled him down. Fingers like steel hooks squeezed his throat. He gurgled. He was pop-eyed. His grass sandals were kicking the stone floor.

It was a small, scratching noise unheard on the porch of the shack where the two privates drowsed and rolled cigarettes.

The corporal's toes ceased their rustling agitation. His lank body was as limp as an empty sack. It slid gently from the side of the cot. It sprawled so still that a green lizard ran over one twisted leg and paused close by to swell its ruby throat. The hour of the siesta appeared to have overtaken this luckless corporal somewhat earlier than usual.

His absence would cause comment. Richard Cary upheaved himself from the cot and almost toppled over. He struggled to keep his feet. Drunk with fever, he began to walk with a giddy, erratic motion in the direction of the door. He succeeded in reaching it. Grasping the timbered framework, he stood there half-blinded by the dazzle of the sun. The two Colombian soldiers looked up and saw him.

Body and blood of San Felipe! What an apparition! A man raised from the dead and such a man! What had befallen the corporal? It was easy to guess that. For the moment these two affrighted soldiers were incapable of motion. The love of life, however, pricked them to scramble for their rifles. Already the fearful specter of the *Americano* was lurching from the doorway, across the yard, straight at them.

With chattering teeth, Private Francisco dived to clutch a rifle. Private Manuel tripped and rammed into him. They clawed each other, with bitter words. The sturdier Francisco was first to lay hands on a rifle. He pulled trigger. Nothing but a foolish click. It was the corporal's rifle, unloaded because he had intended cleaning it *mañana*. Francisco flung the useless thing aside. He could run faster without it.

The *Americano* picked up the discarded rifle and wheeled

in pursuit of him. For a dead man, this yellow-haired ogre could be as quick as a tiger. As if the rifle were no heavier than a pebble, he hurled it, butt foremost, at the fleeing Francisco. It struck him on the hip. He turned a somersault. So fast was he running that his heels flipped over his head. When he fell, the dust whirled like brown smoke. He tried to crawl away on hands and knees.

The *Americano* turned to find the other soldier. He was on the porch, about to fire his rifle. The barrel waved like a leaf in a gale. Here was enough to disturb the bravest soldier. The first bullet went singing off into the blue sky. Before Manuel could shoot again, something like a house fell upon him and flattened him out. His head whacked a plank. A fist drove his jaw askew. He was instantly as peaceful as the corporal who slumbered with a green lizard for a comrade.

The disabled Francisco had not crawled far on hands and knees. Richard Cary tottered after him and dragged him to the timbered doorway of the vaulted cell. A thrust of the foot and Francisco rolled inside like a bale. It was better to stay there, he thought, than to try to run away again. And now Manuel was dumped in on top of him. The iron door closed and the key squeaked in the rusty lock. Richard Cary tossed the key over the roof of the shack.

Thus far he had behaved with normal promptitude and efficiency. Now he reeled to the bench on the porch and fought against utter collapse. His head spun like a top as he groped for a coffee pot on the table and drained the black brew to the dregs. It seemed to steady his quivering nerves, to clear the mists of fever from his brain. He would go and search for his ship until he dropped in his tracks.

One of the discarded rifles caught his eye, but he found

it too heavy to carry. A machete hung from a peg in the wall. It was a handy weapon, with a straight blade. With it he slashed strips from the hammock and tied them around his bare feet. There was a grain of method in his madness.

The machete in his hand, he moved out into the yard and gazed up at the city wall. Here and there were easy ascents, he knew, built for the passage of troops and vehicles. One of these sloping roadways ought to be somewhere near the prison which had once been the barracks of the Spanish garrison. From the lofty parapets he should be able to see the harbor and the wharf where the *Tarragona* berthed. Then he could perhaps make his way thither before an alarm was raised. If they tried to stop him, he would hack a path with the machete.

Rocking on his feet and muttering aloud, he walked out of the yard and turned at random. Unseen, he passed into a paved alley and saw in front of him a wide ramp leading to the top of the wall. Fortune had not deserted him. Very slowly he climbed the rutted, crumbling slope, panting for breath, his face a bright crimson, his knees crippling under him. He could not finish the ascent, and yet he did. He was broken in body, but his will urged him on.

Gaining the broad esplanade he made for the nearest parapet. It was at the corner of a bastion where stood a small, round sentry tower. With arms outspread he clung to this support while his swimming gaze raked the harbor. It was not yet noon, for the white hull and the yellow funnel of the *Tarragona* glistened alongside the cargo sheds. The distance was not far. Through a gateway in the wall he might reach the beach and so leave the city behind him. Unless his strength should utterly forsake him, a merciful deliverance was beckoning.

He found it much easier, however, to cling to the small round sentry tower than to resume his pitiable pilgrimage. He tried it once, twice, and stumbled drunkenly. But he was not beaten — he could not be — while the blessed sight of the *Tarragona* compelled him. He tried again and advanced toward a square, grim mass of stone that marked the nearest gateway.

Then he heard three blasts blown on a steamer's whistle, deep-throated and prolonged. He knew the *Tarragona's* voice and what this signal meant. It was her courteous adieu to Cartagena. She was outward bound, through the Boca Chica and to the rolling spaces of the Caribbean. Richard Cary dragged himself to the parapet and stood looking at his ship, but only for a moment. Then he buried his face in his arms. Sobs shook him. It was the cruelest joke that ever a man had played on him. He damned Captain Sterry for a dirty hound that would leave his second mate in a fix like this.

Ashamed of crying like a silly woman, he retraced his steps to the sentry tower. It was shady inside, with deep slits of windows. He did not wish to see the *Tarragona* move away from the wharf. He slid to the floor and sat propped against the wall, his chin against his breast. His ruling impulse had kept delirium under for a little while. Now he became a prey to all manner of curious thoughts. Dominant was the resolve that they should not take him alive. He whetted the edge of the machete on a rough stone, and tested the balance of it and the grip of the hilt. He would give a good account of himself on the wall of Cartagena.

CHAPTER IX

THE GOOD HERMIT OF LA POPA

The cloth bound round his tousled head, the torn shirt that bared his chest, the pongee trousers soiled with sweat and dust, the strips of canvas wrapped about his feet, made this wounded fugitive the image of a buccaneer as he sat waiting in the round watch-tower with the machete across his knees. It was not long before the temper of savage defiance yielded to exhaustion. Oblivion enfolded his senses and he relaxed in a stupor that was a counterfeit of sleep. The scowling visage took on the gentler aspect, boyish and engaging, that was familiar to his shipmates. It was an interlude.

He did not stir when the stone barracks inside the city wall were agitated by some loud excitement. There was confused shouting, orders bandied to and fro, the shrill *alerte* of a bugle, squads of soldiers pattering at the double-quick. All this indicated that the hapless privates, Francisco and Manuel, had found an audience.

The hue-and-cry passed by the broad ramp that led to the top of the wall. It was perhaps assumed that the mad *Americano* would spread havoc in the city streets or break for the harbor to hide in some boat and escape by sea. It was the first duty of the soldiers to protect the people of Cartagena. Therefore they scattered to warn and search, ready to shoot on sight.

Meanwhile the hunted man's respite was unbroken. When, at length, he lifted his head and hastily caught up the machete to resume his sullen vigil, the prison area had resumed its wonted quietude. There were no sounds to

suggest an alarm. The sun had passed the meridian by an hour or so, as Richard Cary discovered through a slitted window. He was surprised that his hiding-place had not been discovered. He could hope for no such good fortune as concealing himself in the watch-tower until nightfall. And how would that aid him? He was trapped. Death clamored for him in the city. It was certain to overtake him in the swamps and jungle if he should succeed in stealing away. The sea was also impossible. He could never reach it.

The effort of rising to his feet left him all spent and trembling. He could not have walked a score of yards in the deadly heat of the sun. The muscles of his back were so stiffened and inflamed that he was bent like an old man knotted with rheumatism. His head was even more troublesome. After the lull, it was aflame again. One moment he was able to think, the next he was lost in a welter of phantasms. He closed his eyes because the light hurt them. He would hear the Colombian soldiers when they came near the watch-tower.

A little while, however, and the aching brightness of the sky was tempered by clouds that gathered swiftly. They grew black as they rolled toward the zenith, with a flickering play of lightning. The distant mutter of thunder swelled in rolling detonations. At first the rain came in a flurry of drops. Richard Cary mistook the sound for the pit-pat-pat of the hurrying feet of Colombian soldiers. With a groan he lurched out of the watch-tower to finish the thing in the open.

The tropical rain came down like a flood, as though the clouds spilled a solid deluge of water. A whistling squall swept it in sheets. Between the parapets was a gushing river which spouted through the embrasures and rushed

down the ramp. It was a torrential downpour unknown to northern climes.

To Richard Cary it was the saving grace of heaven. It beat against him, cooling his parched skin, refreshing him like an elixir. It quenched the fires that had so grievously tormented him. He felt the strength revive in his weary body. He forgot the stiffness, the hurts, the hopelessness of a man in the last ditch. He scooped up the rain in his cupped hand and lapped it like a dog.

The blessed rain did more than this. It offered a chance of extricating himself from the immediate perils besetting him. The squall drove the rain in sheets, obscuring the buildings of the city, veiling the harbor. He gripped the machete blade between his teeth and threw a leg over the outer parapet. It was a thirty-foot drop to the bottom, which was a shallow depression where the moat had been. The stones had been cunningly cut and fitted to build a wall with a smooth facing, but the tooth of time had gnawed deep crevices in which grass had taken root.

Richard Cary's fingers found rough corners to cling to, and lodgment for his toes. Cautiously groping, he let himself down from one stone to another. It was not a vastly difficult feat, easier than those other Devon seamen of long ago had found it to scale these same walls with ladders. When giddiness halted him, he fastened himself to the stones like a great bat and waited for the spell to pass.

Finally he let go and dropped to the ground. It had been a wrenching ordeal, but when the pain was unendurable he had the machete to bite on. The space outside the wall, which was a populous open-air market and resort for idlers, had been suddenly deserted. The terrific rain had driven every last soul to shelter. The fugitive made a limping détour to reach a strip of beach beyond the quay. Fisher-

men with their baskets, the vendors of green stuffs, the carts and the burros, had scampered to find dry places.

It was a homing instinct, this endeavor to escape to salt water. There was no plan. In fact there was no clear expectation of getting anywhere. It was enough, for the moment, to be outside the walls of Cartagena. Far better risk drowning than be riddled with bullets by the comrades of Francisco and Manuel.

Between the driving sheets of rain he caught glimpses of the yellow beach. Two or three dugout canoes were drawn up. One of them had a lading of green bananas. The fugitive plodded toward them and no man came to hinder him. The rain was all about him like a misty curtain. He stumbled in the soft sand above high-water mark and fell against the gunwale of an empty canoe. It was a small craft, but heavy. To push it into the water seemed a task altogether beyond him. However, he set his shoulder against the blunt bow and dug his feet into the sand.

Gashed and harried and fevered, it was the inherited bulldog strain in "Big Dick" Cary that sufficed for this final struggle on the sands of Cartagena. The canoe moved, an inch at a time, to the harder surface of the tide-washed beach. Then it slid faster until the surf kicked up by the squall was splashing against it. The stern floated.

Cary stood up and looked out at the foaming, rain-swept lagoon. He could not drive the canoe ahead against the wind, but he remembered a wooded point not far away and a lee beyond it. This he might fetch on a slanting course with the ebbing tide to help.

A last dogged thrust and the canoe floated in the surf. He tumbled over the side and fell face downward in the tepid rainwater that washed over the bottom boards. Righting himself, he caught up a short paddle and swung

the bow away from the beach. He crouched amidships and did little more than steer, with a few strokes now and then to hold the course and avoid drifting broadside on. These motions were done mechanically, like an automaton. The canoe safely skirted the shore where it curved an arm out into the lagoon. Behind it was calmer water, a rippling surface on which the canoe floated lazily.

The paddle was idle. The fugitive sat with folded arms, indifferent to the whims of destiny. The tide pulled at the sluggish canoe and it slowly moved abreast of the shore. The rain ceased as suddenly as it had flooded down. The clouds broke and dissolved in ragged fragments until the sky was an inverted bowl of flawless blue. The sun poured its breathless radiance upon a lush landscape that steamed as it dried.

To Richard Cary this was an affliction. An hour of sun would be the finishing stroke. He had not even a straw hat to shield his head. It didn't very much matter what happened to him. He was beyond caring, but it was peculiarly unpleasant to be grilled alive. He made shift to steer the canoe inshore until it grounded. Just beyond the belt of marsh he saw a densely verdured knoll marked by one tall palm. He filled the baling can with the rainwater in the canoe and carried it with him. The machete served to chop a few bushes and so make room for him to crawl into the thicket and lie down.

In spite of the heat a fit of shivering seized him, the chill that presaged a recurrence of fever. Mosquitoes swarmed to plague him. The afternoon waned and he had not moved from this lair in the thicket. Not until sunset did he go crashing through the brushwood and hold fast to the palm tree while he stupidly glared this way and that, imagining ambushed foes.

Behind this bit of low land was a hill that soared abruptly to a height of several hundred feet. Its crest was stark and rugged, with a sheer cliff that dropped toward the sea. It stood alone, this bold and frowning hill, and was a famous landmark from many miles offshore. La Popa, mariners had always called it because of the resemblance to the castellated poop of a galleon. What made it even more prominent was the massive convent whose walls were like a fortress, a structure which, at a distance, looked as if it had never been despoiled and forsaken. Both Drake and De Pontis the Frenchman had held it for ransom.

It had become a mere shell, a noble relic of the religious zeal of another age. At one end nestled the chapel and this had been preserved, still used for the infrequent advocation to Our Lady of La Popa by priests and pious pilgrims of Cartagena. From the city a rough path led up the sloping ridge of the hill, a path trodden by many generations of nuns and worshipers.

La Popa! The huge white convent looming on the summit of the cliff! A place for a man to hide and scan the Caribbean for sight of a ship. There Drake had posted his sentries to guard against surprise by galleons coming from the north or south. A long, hard climb up the hill, through the jungle at the base, and then a circuit to get clear of the cliff where the defenders had rolled rocks down upon the heads of certain English seamen. It might be done, however, if a man could find the path. A full moon rising early and the convent gleaming above to set his bearings by!

Soon after dawn of the following morning, the caretaker of the Chapel of Our Lady of La Popa came pottering out of a hut built in a corner of the roofless convent. His errand was to tether his two goats on the herbage of the slope. He was a spare man, lame in one leg and feeling the burden of

years. Having lived much by himself in this lonely retreat, he had formed the habit of talking to himself in the unkempt gray beard. By way of variety he often talked to the goats whom he fondly addressed by name.

Having tethered them while the air was still cool, this kindly Palacio untied a rusty tin cup from his belt and milked Mercedes who was a docile animal. The cup of warm milk and a *tortilla* of coarse meal was a breakfast that sufficed him. While munching the sooty *tortilla* he gazed about him from under shaggy brows and, as always at this time of day, admired the roseate splendor of Cartagena and its everlasting walls. There was nothing in all the world to compare with it, reflected this elderly recluse. The browsing Mercedes waggled her tufted chin in agreement.

Presently Palacio picked up his cane and wandered along the slope to inspect his garden patch of beans and peppers. It was a continual skirmish to save the beans from the forays of the other goat, Lolita, who was a young creature of feminine caprices and often possessed of a devil. Palacio's rebukes, even the threat of making goat's-meat of her, left Lolita's heart untouched.

In the grass beside the garden patch, Palacio was startled to perceive a large object which had not been there before. Cautiously he backed away and leaned on his stick while he scrutinized the phenomenon. It was a man asleep or dead, a man of prodigious bulk and brawn whose clothing was no more than dirty tatters. His skin was criss-crossed with scratches and smeared with dried blood. A stranger to Palacio, and a man so strange to this part of the world that he might have dropped from the skies!

Timidly the caretaker approached the body in the grass and knelt to touch its cheek. The flesh was warm, even hot

and angry. Gaining courage, he tugged at the man and rolled him over to discover any serious injuries. He found a knife wound in the back and a lump on the head as big as a tangerine. If the man had climbed the hill of La Popa, it was a miracle. Where had he come from? It was the divine influence of Our Lady, whose shrine was in the chapel, that he should be found alive in this place.

"What a thing to stumble on when I lead my goats out in the morning!" said Palacio, both hands in his beard. "Never has a wonder like this happened to me. I am at the end of my poor wits. If I go down to Cartagena to find a doctor, it is slow walking for me with my lame leg on the rough path — and this enormous man may die in the grass. Soon the sun will be too hot to leave him without a roof over his head."

In his agitation Palacio limped to and fro. Could he roll this man over and over like a sack of coffee, as far as the threshold of the convent? Then perhaps he might drag him into the hut. It could do him no more damage. As it was, he looked as if he had fallen off the cliff. In spite of his lameness, Palacio was tough and sinewy. When in his prime he had been a laborer on the quay, carrying heavy freight on his back.

The goats had cropped the grass until it was a green sward. Palacio grunted and began to roll the man like a cask. A groan dismayed him. This would not do. It was more merciful to try to drag the body a little way at a time, like a burro hitched to an ox-cart. Nobly Palacio hauled and panted until he had progressed as far as the stake that tethered Mercedes. She trotted over to nuzzle him. It was an expression of sympathy. He felt much encouraged. Lolita, the jade, was waiting to rear on her hind legs and butt her master behind the knees.

"Horned offspring of perdition," he told her, "do not add to my troubles. Poor Palacio is almost breaking himself in two for the sake of love and charity. Butt me again and the dust shall fly from your speckled hide."

A back-breaking task it was, but Palacio managed to drag his burden to the hole in the convent wall where a door had been. A bed of straw and a blanket on the floor of his hut was all the comfort he could contrive for the unbidden guest. So fatigued that his legs were like two sticks, the anxious Palacio mixed a little warm goat's-milk and rum in the tin cup and forced it between the man's lips. It seemed to trickle down his throat. Then he dosed him with a bitter draught from a bottle, a tincture of quinine and herbs which had assuaged his own spells of fever.

With a singular deftness, Palacio washed the patient and tore up a clean shirt to bandage him. That wound in the back was alarming, so livid and inflamed, but it might heal if kept cleansed and dressed.

"A man like this is very hard to kill," he said aloud. "To look at him you would say he had already suffered several deaths. The air is cool and healthy up here on La Popa, and there is the sweet presence of Our Lady. I will light a candle at her shrine and a fresh one as soon as that is burned down, poor man though I am. The life of this enormous stranger with the hair like gold belongs to me. It is a gift of God."

It was a battered, useless gift, the wreckage of Richard Cary. Hard to kill, though, as Palacio had concluded. In his favor were youth, extraordinary vitality, and clean blood untainted by dissipation. Illness was unknown to him. Through two long days and nights the devoted Palacio watched and nursed him, nodding off at intervals. That bitter brew in the bottle was holding the fever in

check, and the diet of goat's-milk and onion broth was efficacious.

The patient babbled while delirious. Palacio understood almost nothing of what he said, but one inference was beyond doubt. The sick man's voice, the message of his eyes, the restless movements of his hands were easily interpreted. He was afraid of discovery. Enemies were in pursuit of him. It was an issue of life and death. Palacio referred the problem to the responsive Mercedes while milking her.

"What is to be done, little comfort of mine? This man is innocent of crime. You have seen him for yourself. He has won my trust and affection, and he is my guest. Not many visitors come to La Popa from the city. It is an old story to them. But the American tourists from the fruit boats will come early some morning to see the convent. The men will sit on the rocks and say, '*Zowie! damn-fine-view*,' and the women will poke their noses everywhere. Our guest will make curiosity and be chattered about in Cartagena and down at the ships. He wishes to be hidden away until his health is restored. What do you advise, most intelligent of little goats?"

The most intelligent Mercedes tossed her head and ambled in the direction of the convent wall, as far as her tether permitted. Then she pawed the grass with a sharp hoof. Palacio eyed her gravely. She was trying to assist him. He pondered the matter, twisting his beard tight. Blockhead that he was! To have to be instructed by a goat! She was showing him what to do. He hurried into the hut for a lantern. Into the convent cellar he clambered and then crept into an opening where the stones had been dislodged.

It was the entrance of the ancient tunnel which was said

to have led to the foot of the hill and so beneath the walls of Cartagena as a secret passage to be used in time of siege. Such was the tradition. It was possible, however, to explore only a short distance from La Popa because rocks and dirt had filled the tunnel.

"Two or three days more," said Palacio, "and I can move my guest into this chamber where only God himself will find him. Visitors can be told that the tunnel has caved in since the last heavy rain."

This was partly the truth. A hole had appeared in the gullied surface of the hill, but it was a dozen yards away from the convent wall and hidden by a clump of small trees. It let the light into the tunnel, and the air drew through it by day and night. Palacio courteously thanked Mercedes for stamping her hoof directly over the underground passage. She had handsomely solved the problem.

He spared no pains to make the secret chamber habitable for his guest. In the chapel was found a disused table and a carved oak chair big enough to hold an archbishop. There was also a strip of carpet and two brass candlesticks. Palacio fashioned a bed of limber poles bound with rawhide thongs, and stretched a piece of old canvas across the frame.

During the labor of love, what of Richard Cary? The stormy stress of mind and body was past. The whirling tumult of emotions, the repeated shocks of perils and escapes, were no more tangible than dreams. Indeed, they seemed to belong with his dreams of the Cartagena of the galleons and the *conquistadores*. He was in a haven of lucid tranquillity, unvexed by the past, with no thought of the future. Physical weakness constrained him, but Nature was eager to heal and restore, and he felt no great discom-

fort. It was a state of apathy that brought the anodyne of contentment.

It amused him to listen to the droning monologues of Palacio as he pottered about the hut. They exchanged a few phrases in English and Spanish and became amazingly well acquainted thereby. Between them was the fondness of a father and son. The goats walked in to pay their respects, Mercedes the well-mannered lady at a bedside, Lolita rudely foraging for provender and chewing stray garments until Palacio thumped her with a broken stool.

It was a memorable moment when the guest was helped to lift himself from the pallet of straw. He swayed against the straining Palacio, their arms across each other's shoulders. In this manner they staggered into the cellar by arduous stages and thence to the chamber inside the tunnel entrance. The guest expected his weight to crush the spare Palacio, but it was do or die. The achievement made them hilarious. Palacio uncorked a treasured bottle of red wine. Later he knelt at the shrine of Nuestra Señora de La Popa and humbly offered thanks for the recovery of his dear friend and guest.

In the underground room the hours passed without impatience. Light filtered through the gullied opening in the roof. The air was never sultry. A roving armadillo tumbled through the hole and consented to stay a while, lured by bits of food. It curled up in its scaly armor and slept under a bench. Its serene attitude toward life was worthy of imitation.

"But I can't stay here curled up in *my* shell," said Señor Cary to the placid armadillo. "For one thing, I am imposing on Palacio's good nature with no way of repaying him. And the old codger is pretty well worn out. As soon as my

legs will hold me up, I must work out some plan of campaign or other. But why fret about it now? *Mañana!*"

With a steady mind he returned to the situation day after day. To try to smuggle himself aboard a Fruit Company's steamer was one possibility. It was thrashed out and dismissed. Ignorant that Colonel Fajardo had ceased to be the *Comandante* of the Port or anything else, he pictured him as venomously vigilant to watch and search every vessel leaving Cartagena. Without friends or money it was out of the question to try to reach some other port by land. The delta of the Magdalena was one vast wilderness of swamp and water-courses.

He was still ensnared, but no longer a frenzied fugitive without a refuge, and he possessed the unquenchable optimism of a strong and competent young man.

Very often his thoughts dwelt with Teresa Fernandez. Her kisses were dearly remembered, her voice echoed in his heart, and the gay fortitude with which she met the buffets of life appealed to his chivalry. She was a woman worth loving forever and a day.

A fortnight more, and the *Tarragona* would be steaming across the Caribbean, on another southern voyage, to pick up her landfall for Cartagena, sighting the abrupt and lofty hill of La Popa from many miles at sea. Now that his strength was flowing back, Richard Cary could not remain buried like a mole. Inaction would soon become both irksome and cowardly. One thing was certain. He swore to find Teresa Fernandez, returning in the *Tarragona*, and to hold her in his arms.

There was only one hope of attaining this desire, of making the resolve more than an empty boast. Teresa's uncle, that "funny old guy" Señor Ramon Bazán, had shown a liking for him during that brief visit in the moonlit

patio. "A delicious hit," Teresa had called it. This might mean nothing at all. A man in his dotage, tricky and whimsical, had been the impression left by the shriveled uncle with the little brown monkey perched upon his shoulder.

What his relations might be with the officials of Cartagena was impossible to surmise. He had been a person of consequence in earlier years, a figure in the political affairs of Colombia. This much Teresa had conveyed in the remark that he had once been sent to Washington by the Government at Bogotá. Would he feel inclined to protect an American refugee whom the authorities were hunting like a dangerous animal? What of the obligations of the hospitality which he had so warmly proffered? A rope of sand, as likely as not. Spanish courtesy in its finest flower had been displayed by the lowly Palacio, but with Señor Ramon Bazán it was a very different situation. Doubtless he knew what Richard Cary had done and why he was branded as a criminal condemned to execution.

Ah, well, what else was life than a gamble on the turn of a card? A proper man ought not to hesitate whenever the stake was worth the hazard. Teresa Fernandez would risk as much for him, of this Richard Cary felt convinced. She was that kind of a woman. Win or lose, he would try to meet her in the house of Uncle Ramon Bazán while the *Tarragona* was in port.

There was only one way to put the hazard to the touch. This was to send Palacio into Cartagena with a note to the bizarre old gentleman. It meant revealing the hiding-place on the hill of La Popa and inviting capture. The message would have to be an appeal to find some ingenious plan of smuggling the fugitive through the city streets. He was not yet strong enough even to walk down the rocky path to the foot of the hill.

"A rotten poor bet," said the guest of the good Palacio, "but show me another one. And if I can get into Cartagena, I can get out again. By God, I'm going to kiss my girl."

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT YELLOW TIGER

Sending a message to Señor Bazán was easier said than done. Pen and paper were not essential to the simple life of Palacio for the excellent reason that he had never learned to read or write. The hut was rummaged in vain. Much perturbed, Palacio limped into the chapel and returned with a tattered missal. Heaven knows how long this illuminated black-letter volume had reposed in a dusty niche of the pulpit. Sacrilege it might be to tear out a broad-margined leaf, but Palacio promised himself to do penance. With a sharp bit of charcoal the derelict mariner wrote on the margin:

My dear Señor Bazán:

I am disabled and in serious trouble. If you feel like lending a hand, you will have to send somebody to get me down the hill of La Popa, and safely to your house. The Señorita Teresa Fernandez told me how to say *ver las orejas del lobo*. "To see the ears of the wolf" means to be in great danger, I take it. This seems to fit the case of

Yours sincerely

Richard Cary

Anxiously Palacio looked on and furiously rumpled his gray beard. He did not approve. To hear the name of old Ramon Bazán was enough. Some unpleasant gossip or other had lingered in his simple mind. He had not always been the hermit of La Popa. Timidly at first and then in a scolding humor he objected to the procedure. The beloved guest was safe, as things were, and rapidly regaining health and vigor. Leave it to Palacio to safeguard him against his enemies and, in due time, to devise some means of

flight. It might be up the great river and across the mountains to the other ocean, such a journey as Palacio had made in his own youth.

Gently but stubbornly the guest persuaded his benefactor to undertake the mission. Consent was hard wrung, but in the last resort Palacio could not deny any wish of the mighty, fair-haired Ricardo, the apple of his eye. It was toward the middle of the afternoon when the reluctant messenger took his staff and said farewell.

"God willing," he called back. "God willing," he was repeating to himself as he trudged past the garden patch, "*Como Dios es servido, ó si Dios es servido — ó siendo Dios servido.*"

Shortly after the departure, Richard Cary concluded to essay walking out of his tunneled chamber, as far as a gap in the convent wall. It was necessary to know whether he was capable of this much effort. Very carefully he guided his uncertain steps across the cellar, like a child learning to walk. It seemed ridiculous. A touch would have pushed him over. His brawn had been so much fuel for the fever to feed upon.

Elated by the venture he sat down to rest on a broad stone slab from which he could see the slope of the hill toward Cartagena, and the sea flashing beyond the barrier of the Boca Grande. It filled him with a sense of buoyancy and freedom, with emotions too deep for words. Circumstances still shackled him, but once more he beheld wide horizons and felt the freshening trade wind brush his cheek, the wind that had blown so many stout ships across the Caribbean.

He was alive again, eager to follow wherever fickle fortune might beckon. If the odds should veer in his favor, would he want to go back to the monotonous trade of sea-

faring in a merchant steamer out of New York? It seemed incongruous, a world away. The Spanish Main had been cruel to him, but he had ceased to feel resentment. It had been a game of give-and-take. His was the winning score. The next turn of events was worth waiting for. Heads or tails?

The peaked straw hat of Palacio had long since bobbed down the hill and across the causeway to a gateway of the city wall. Gradually the violet shadows crept over the sward beside the melancholy pile of the convent. The goats raised their voices to notify the lonely watcher that something was wrong. It was time for them to trot in to shelter.

It was time also for Richard Cary to seek his own retreat before the dusk should make him stumble in the débris of the cellar. He was most loath to leave the open sky and the westering glow and the communion of the salt breeze. Laboriously he made his way to the darkened refuge in the earth and lighted a candle. The complaisant armadillo had sauntered off on some twilight errand of its own. Silly, but the solitary man wished he had the armadillo to talk to. Again immured, his spirits were overcast.

Out of doors, he had regained his large and placid indifference to whatever might impend. Now his nerves were tautening. The answer of Señor Ramon Bazán might be a file of Colombian soldiers hurrying up the hill. With a shrug, he thrust such fears aside. Win or lose, he must play his hand out. No more of that crazed torment which had bitten into his brain while he had crouched in the round watch-tower, whetting the machete on a rough stone.

Once while he had stood with Teresa Fernandez at the rail of the *Tarragona*, she had hummed a verse or two of a song called the Breton Sailor's Litany, remembered from a

voyage to Brest in her girlhood. He had learned it as well as he could, for the pleasure of hearing her murmur the words over and over again.

"Dieu puissant, notre père,
Qui commandez aux flots,
Écoutez la prière
Des pauvres matelots."

It came back to him now, with the translation she had also taught him to say. He found peace and comfort in it, as if Teresa herself were bidding him to hold fast to his courage:

"God all powerful, our Father,
Thou Who commandest the sea,
Listen to the prayer
Of the poor mariners."

The first significant sound to catch his listening ear was the excited bleating of the goats tethered almost over his head. Nothing else than the return of Palacio could make them so suddenly vocal. A delay while he found his lantern, and the weary messenger came stumbling through the cellar, shouting to ask if Ricardo was alive and well. It was hard to find out what news he brought. There was no word in writing from Señor Ramon Bazán, and Palacio's long narrative was poured out in Spanish so tumultuous that it meant very little to his guest.

It had something to do with a pile of wood and a mule and a *muchacho*. This much was picked out of the jumble. In Palacio's croaking accents was also a violent distrust of the manners, morals, and motives of the aged Señor Bazán. Having simmered down, he made it comprehensible that Ricardo was to make ready to go at once, *pronto*, into Cartagena by night. Means had been provided. Much distraught, Palacio toddled to his hut to find and offer a

patched tarpaulin cape and a new peaked straw hat woven by himself. He had already washed and mended Cary's tattered shirt and trousers.

Lack of a razor contributed to the general effect of a Robinson Crusoe as the fugitive emerged from his earthy abode. It was, indeed, a venture in the darkness. *Quien sabe?* The riddle of Señor Bazán's intentions was still unsolved.

"Here goes," said Richard Cary, looking about him in the starlight. "I'll soon find out whether I am putting my head in a trap or not. Where do we go from here? *Donde?*"

Palacio whistled. A gray mule came sidling into the lantern's glow. Leading it by the bridle was the Indian lad whom Cary recalled seeing in the *patio* of Uncle Ramon. There was no saddle. A sack was tied across the mule's back.

"What kind of foolishness is this?" objected the passenger. "I see myself parading through Cartagena on the quarter-deck of a flop-eared mule. *Oiga!* The Colombian infantry could never miss a target like that."

The Indian lad caught the drift of this tirade and grinned a reassurance. Palacio volubly insisted that it was *muy bueno*, so far as the mule was concerned. Again he chattered about the mysterious pile of wood. He had labored with it himself. He lifted imaginary sticks and groaned with both hands clapped to his back. Richard Cary subsided. He was in no position to quibble over details.

His companions hoisted him astride the mule. It was a very strong mule or its legs would have bent. Palacio limped as far as the garden patch. Another journey down the hill and back again was too much for him. He embraced his guest, his splendid son, and fervently commended him to God and Nuestra Señora de La Popa. If he

weathered the stormy gale of circumstances, Richard Cary pledged himself somehow to repay this humble recluse with the heart of gold.

The sure-footed mule picked its way down the broken path, the lithe Indian lad chirruping in its ear. Beyond the foot of the hill, where a road swung inland from the harbor, the lad turned aside. At the edge of the jungle was hidden a ponderous, two-wheeled cart. It was heaped high with cordwood. Stakes at the sides prevented it from spilling. The *muchacho* nudged Cary to dismount. The mule was backed into the shafts and a brass-bound harness slung on its back.

"I suspected a nigger in the woodpile," reflected the dubious Cary, "and now I know it. Just where do I fit into this load of wood? Hi, boy! What about it? *Qué es esto?*"

The lad motioned him to examine for himself. A false bottom had been laid in the body of the cart. Between the floor that rested upon the axle and the upper platform of boards was a space perhaps a foot and a half deep. Into this the bulk of Richard Cary was expected to insert itself. He thanked his stars that illness had reduced his flesh. It was the utter helplessness of being flattened in there, underneath the pile of wood, that made him flinch. It was too much like being nailed in a coffin. To be discovered and hauled out by the heels would be a fate too absurd to contemplate.

However, if there was a beggar alive who could not be a chooser, it was this same Richard Cary. He had to admire the ingenuity of the contrivance. A belated countryman hauling a load of firewood to the city in the cool of the night would pass unnoticed, whereas a curtained carriage might invite scrutiny. The stratagem was worthy of the

wizened little man of the *patio*, with the grimace of a clown and the eye of an inquisitor.

Very unhappy, Richard Cary inched himself in beneath the load of wood, flat on his back. The Indian lad, who had a wit of his own, hung over the rear of the cart two bags stuffed with fodder for the mule. These concealed the protruding feet of the melancholy stowaway. It was one way to enter Cartagena, but hurtful to the pride of an adventurer who had waged one hand-to-hand conflict after another in escaping from these same walls. There were precedents among other bold men, however, as far back in history as the wooden horse of Troy.

The springless cart bumped and shook him infernally. He swore at the mule, in muffled accents, and even more earnestly at the crafty Señor Bazán. He could not be blamed for a petulant humor. After an hour or a week or a year, over streets that seemed to be paved with boulders, the load of wood turned into an alley and halted. The *muchacho* was in no haste to extricate his passenger. First the wood had to be thrown off and the false bottom knocked apart. The lad was unequal to the task of hauling his human cargo out by the legs.

Released, at length, from the ignominious cart, Richard Cary was a prey to renewed qualms. The rear wall of Señor Bazán's house was darkly uncommunicative. It told nothing whatever. Presently, however, a door opened on a crack. The Indian lad hissed, "*Rapido.*" The *Americano* was to remove himself from the alley. He obeyed as *rapido* as the cramps in his legs permitted. His senses were set on a hair-trigger for whatever emergency might leap at him.

The door opened far enough to admit him. He brushed through, into a shadowy hall, and collided with the

shrunken figure of Señor Bazán who yelped dismay and retreated as if afraid of being trodden upon like a bug. The uneasy visitor tottered after him, having a fancy for quarters more spacious than this dim, confined hall. It was like a pursuit during which Señor Bazán scurried into a large room which to Richard Cary's unaccustomed vision seemed ablaze with lights. He stood and goggled like an owl.

Many shelves of books, a desk littered with papers and more books, heavy furniture of mahogany and stamped leather — this was evidently a library in which the aged uncle of Teresa spent much of his time.

He, too, blinked bewilderment. The ragged scarecrow of a Cary, with the stubbled beard, the blanched color, and the drawn features, was tragically unlike the ruddy young giant in the crisp white uniform with the gold shoulder bars who had towered beside the galleon bell in the moonlit *patio*. The contrast was deeper than this. Then he had been easy and smiling, the massive embodiment of good-nature. Now his jaw was set, the haggard eyes somberly alert, and his whole demeanor that of a man on guard against an ambuscade. Still absorbed in studying him, Señor Bazán said not a word, but dragged a chair forward and thrust it behind the visitor.

Cary could not have stood on his feet much longer. He dropped into the chair. As a gesture of good-will the old gentleman patted his shoulder and silently vanished to reappear with a tray of cold chicken, salad, bread and cheese, and a bottle of port. Then he cocked his head like a bird and said in English:

"Make yourself easy, my dear young friend. It has been the devil to pay for you since I had the pleasure of meeting you in my house. I have no soldiers hiding behind the curtains, and I have not informed the department of police.

There is a hot bath and a soft bed for you, and my poor company to-morrow."

"I'll have to take your word for it that I am in safe water," sighed Richard Cary, his scowl fading. "Comfort like this is worth any trouble that may break later. There was no reason why I should feel sure of a friendly welcome, sir. I am an outlaw, as you know. It was taking a blind chance."

"'*Ver las orejas del lobo!*' 'To see the ears of the wolf,'" gleefully quoted the old gentleman. "So this is the wolf's den? First I must ask pardon for talking only Spanish when you called with Teresa. It was rude, a shabby trick. There is no better English scholar in Colombia than Ramon Bazán. That girl is so full of mischief that I thought she might lead you on to make fun of her venerable uncle. It would have amused me to listen. Where did I learn my English so well? It means nothing to Teresa — these things happened before she was born; but for several years I was the minister for my country in Washington and later in London. A withered old back-number now, with one foot in the grave, but Ramon Bazán was almost the president of Colombia. A revolution exploded under him. That was many years ago."

A breast of chicken and a glass of port were not too diverting to prevent Richard Cary from paying keen attention. He surmised that Señor Bazán was eager to make a favorable impression, exerting himself to dispel the idea that he was a senile object of curiosity. He desired to awaken respect as well as gratitude. This might be laid to an old man's childish vanity. At any rate, he had ceased to be merely grotesque.

There was no malice on the wrinkled, mobile features of the little old man in the flapping linen clothes. Furtive he

was by nature, the beady black eyes glancing this way and that, the bald scalp twitching, but, for the present, at least, there was no harm in him. This was Richard Cary's intuition. He also guessed that Señor Bazán was anxious to ingratiate himself. If there was a motive behind it, this could be left to divulge itself. The situation hinted of aspects unforeseen.

"You can sleep calmly to-night, Señor Cary," said the host, with his twisted grin, "but many people in Cartagena would stay wide awake if they knew you were so near."

"Am I as notorious as all that, sir? Of course I want to hear the news —"

"As they say, you stood this city on its head," shrilly chuckled Ramon Bazán. "Revolutions have begun with less disturbance in some of our hot little republics of the Caribbean. Rumors flew about until your exploits were frightful. The children of Cartagena have never been so obedient to their parents. All they have to be told is that *El Tigre Amarillo Grande*, the Great Yellow Tiger, will catch them if they are naughty. It was this way — your dead body was not found, although you were on the edge of death when you escaped from the prison. You could not have fled far. This was why you were not looked for at La Popa. Therefore you were no man, but a wicked spirit from hell. The common people are very foolish and ingorant."

"I never meant to upset the town when I came ashore that night," said Cary, smiling in his turn. "You are good enough to shelter me and you ought to know the facts. It was just one thing after another. A gang of roughs tried to wipe me out. In self-defense I stretched two or three of them. My hunch was that Colonel Fajardo had put up the job. If I stayed in jail, he was bound to get me. And my

ship was ready to sail. My duty was to join her. So I walked out of the prison, but was too late to get aboard the *Tarragona*. My head went wrong with fever. I don't know how I climbed La Popa. Well, that's the nubbin of the story."

"Five of the *bravoné* and three soldiers of the prison," grinned Señor Bazán, ticking them off on his fingers. "Am I not a valiant old man to sit alone in the same house with *El Tigre Amarillo Grande?*"

"Not while a word in the telephone yonder would cook my goose," grimly answered the prisoner of fortune. "Please tell me one thing. Did I kill any of those poor devils at the prison? I didn't want to. They got in my way and I had to treat 'em rough."

"By the mercy of God, the corporal whose neck you wrung had a little breath left in him. The two other soldiers are also alive. The five *bravoné* who were serenading the ladies that night? Two were found very dead. Another whose shoulder felt the iron bar died after four days, I am happy to say. That iron bar? My dear young man, crowds of people still gather to look at the window from which *El Tigre* pulled the iron bar like a straw in his hands."

Richard Cary blushed. He was never a braggart nor had he aspired to a reputation like this. "Then I am a bigger fool than I thought I was, to come into Cartagena," said he.

"An amusing fool," replied Señor Bazán, with a whimsical twinkle. "How you expect to get out again is too much for my feeble old wits. Not in a Colombian sailing boat of any kind. Every sailor of Cartagena crosses himself when he hears the name of *El Tigre Amarillo Grande*. The muleteers and men of the river are carrying it back into the mountains. It will soon spread as far away as Bogotá."

"Then why in the name of common sense did you fetch me in from La Popa?" was the blunt question.

"How could I refuse, Señor Cary, when you appealed to my hospitality, you a friend of my niece, the Señorita Fernandez?"

This answer was palpably evasive. Here was a riddle which only time and the crotchety impulses of Ramon Bazán could disclose. The puzzled young man was in no mind to confide that his love for Teresa had urged him to this blind adventure. Cross-currents were already visible. The uncle of Teresa had some design of his own in harboring the sailor refugee. The situation was cleared of immediate peril, however, and Richard Cary concluded that he was not to be betrayed. The rasping voice of Ramon Bazán awoke him from a reverie.

"You suspected Colonel Fajardo of plotting to kill you? Why?"

"Jealousy," was the admission. "And I was warned that he had a bad record."

"Jealousy, Señor Cary?" twittered the old gentleman, highly diverted. "And the woman was that spitfire of a Teresa! I had my suspicions, but it is not politic to wag the tongue too much in Cartagena. As it turned out, this Colonel Fajardo convicted himself."

"The deuce he did," cried Richard Cary. "Then my conscience is clear from start to finish. What do you mean? How did he convict himself?"

"He fled next day — disappeared like smoke. Afraid because you were not dead? Perhaps. Afraid of a plot he had hatched while half-drunk? The fact is that he was seen for the last time on the wharf before the *Tarragona* sailed. Yes, he ran away somewhere, and so confessed himself a guilty man."

"He was that kind," said Cary. "The blackguard invited me to sit and drink with him in a café a little while before his gunmen attacked me. So he lost his nerve and decided to make himself scarce. How did he get away?"

"Possibly in the *Tarragona*. There was some talk that he might have bribed one of the crew to hide him for the short trip to Porto Colombia or Santa Marta. But he has not been seen in those ports. I have inquired of friends. He is very well known on this coast as a colonel of the army before he was appointed *Comandante* of the Port. There it is! Colonel Fajardo has most thoroughly disappeared. I regret you did not hit him with the terrible iron bar."

"I shall always regret it," said Richard Cary. "Doesn't that make it more hopeful for me to climb out of this infernal scrape, Señor Bazán?"

"Not very much. You are charged with murder, assault, breaking prison, and the good God knows what else! And you are *El Tigre Amarillo Grande!* The Fruit Company's agent has shown no interest in your behalf. That would be most useful."

"Captain Sterry may have turned in a bad report in New York, sir. He was biased — there was a personal difference — a grudge of his. He signed on another second mate, I presume, and I was thrown in the discard."

"Then you will have no employment as an officer, even if you are lucky enough to get away from Cartagena, Señor Cary?"

"It sounds ridiculous to look that far ahead," lazily answered the prisoner who found it hard to stay awake. "At present I seem to be cast for the part of *El Tigre*, and it doesn't appeal to me at all."

Señor Bazán scolded himself for exhausting a guest

already weak and in distress of mind. He took the young man by the arm and tried to steady him as they crossed the *patio* and entered a bedroom. The bath was near at hand.

"Pajamas to-morrow, Ricardo," said the host. "The woman in my kitchen is sewing them together. She will also make some white clothes. There are none big enough in the shops. If I visit a tailor he will pass it around as a joke that Ramon Bazán must have *El Tigre Amarillo* in his house. Bolt your door, if it pleases you. The window has strong iron bars and nobody in Cartagena can pull them out to molest you. There are worse friends to have than old Ramon Bazán. That Teresa has called me a funny old guy to my face. You mustn't believe all she tells you."

The old gentleman went fluttering off in his hurried fashion as if shadows were forever chasing him. Richard Cary was awake for a long time. Sounds in the street disturbed him. Once he fancied he heard the distant voices of men singing and the melodious tinkle of a guitar. Again it was the pit-pat-pat of feet on the pavement outside the window. When sleep came to him, his dreams were unhappy.

CHAPTER XI

SPANISH TREASURE!

A DIFFERENT man in fresh white pajamas and straw slippers, Richard Cary idled in a shady corner of the *patio*. A razor had reaped the heavy stubble clean. Not in the least resembling the Yellow Tiger that gobbled naughty children, he looked amiable enough to purr. His status in this household was even more perplexing than at his arrival. Señor Bazán seemed to be afraid of his disfavor. Afraid? It should have been the other way about. It was for the helpless fugitive to exert himself, by every means in his power, to win and hold the regard of the eccentric old gentleman who held his life in the hollow of his hand.

Every precaution was taken to guard the secret of his presence in this house. The outer doors were kept locked. The only servants were the Indian lad and a fat black woman in the kitchen. These two mortally feared the wrath of Señor Bazán, and were close-mouthed by habit. He had taught them the doctrine of assiduously minding their own business. Moreover, it was a thing far more perilous to risk the vengeance of *El Tigre Amarillo* should they drop even a whisper outside the house. How calm and harmless he seemed, but imagine him in one of those rages! It was common report that no bullet could slay him.

Señor Bazán endeavored to display his very best behavior. The flighty fits of temper were restrained and he was thoughtful of the small courtesies. As Teresa had said, he was a very old man, brittle and easily tired. At times the wheezing spells almost choked him. Quite often he

dozed off with a book in his lap. Otherwise he was diabolically wide awake.

More like himself every day, Richard Cary knew that inaction would soon fret him beyond endurance. In the New Hampshire farmhouse at home he could sit and look at the fire through long lazy spells, but this senseless confinement was very different. He was living and waiting for the arrival of the *Tarragona*. After that? Ramon Bazán insisted that it was impossible to flee this hostile coast, nor did he offer the smallest hint of willingness to coöperate in any attempt. Why, then, had Richard Cary been fetched into Cartagena? It was a question that pursued itself in a tedious circle.

With all the leisure in the world to mull it over, Cary found solace in the briar pipe with the amber bit which was the sole possession left him. Through his tempestuous escapades it had stayed in a trousers pocket. A pipe with a charmed life, he thought, and a precious reminder of Teresa Fernandez and their last glimpse of each other.

Now he laid it on the stone flagging beside his canvas chair, and the little brown monkey came frisking over from the trellis. It snatched the pipe in a tiny black paw and was about to stick it in his mouth when Cary interfered. He laughed at the indignant little beast which squeaked profane opinions of a man who would deny a petted monkey a morning pipe. The puckered countenance, the spiteful grimace, the gusty temper, were absurdly like Señor Bazán when things displeased him. At one moment the Spanish gentleman of culture and manners, in the next he might be a chattering, scolding tyrant with no manners whatever.

Crack-brained? So Teresa had expressed herself, but her relations with her uncle appeared to be uncertain, an intermittent feud, and she was not apt to give the devil his due.

As a rule, Richard Cary's verdicts were slowly formulated and uncolored by prejudice. In this instance he felt more and more convinced that there was some unseen method in the madness of Señor Ramon Bazán. He had enticed *El Tigre Amarillo Grande* into a comfortable cage and proposed to keep him there.

Meanwhile the wizened keeper of the tiger was frequently leaving the house on some affairs of his own. He went jogging off in a hired carriage and was not seen again for hours. He brought back American magazines and tobacco, phonograph records, delicacies from the market, anything to amuse the restless Ricardo, who chafed under the increasing burden of obligation. Nothing was said to explain why Señor Bazán should spend so much time away from his house. Secretiveness enwrapped him. He moved like an industrious conspirator.

On the day before the *Tarragona* was due in port, Richard Cary took occasion to say:

"You have been a wonderfully kind friend to me, Señor Bazán, and I don't deserve it. Now that I am getting fit to take care of myself, I must plan to get away somehow. I have been waiting for the arrival of the ship, to see the Señorita Fernandez again —"

Uncle Ramon bounced from his chair and wildly waved his hands as he cried:

"It was that girl all the time! The devil fly away with her! But I must let you see her or there will be another commotion with an iron bar. All right, Ricardo. Teresa is sure to come to my house to ask if anything was heard about you after the steamer sailed away with her. How can I keep you from seeing that girl? You have an infatuation."

"I shall take no chances," was the dogged reply. "She

might be kept on board. I'll write her a letter and you will send it down to the ship or carry it yourself."

This ripped the temper of Señor Bazán to shreds. He slapped his bald pate and his false teeth clicked as he vociferated:

"Writing letters is a trick of —— —— idiots. It would make me as big a fool as you are to let a letter go out of my house, a letter you had written to a sweetheart. What happens to me if Cartagena finds out I am hiding you here? Bah! That girl has turned your brain into a rotten egg."

Taken aback by this tantrum, Cary was strongly inclined to twist the old gentleman's neck. It was not really essential, however, to write a letter. Soothingly he suggested:

"Then you will promise to let her know that she must come to the house while she is in port. Without fail? She will guess that something is in the wind."

"Yes, I will do that much," grumbled Uncle Ramon. "I have to keep you quiet. I will drive down to the ship and bring Teresa back with me. What if the chief steward or somebody forbids her to go ashore?"

"She will come anyhow, unless I am all wrong about her," said Cary.

"God knows what is in the heart of a girl like that," spitefully retorted her uncle.

"One thing more, Señor Bazán. The chief engineer of the ship, Mr. McClement, is a friend of mine. I wish to get word to him, too. He can be trusted absolutely. If you will slip a word to Teresa, she will arrange it so that he can drop in for a chat after dark. McClement is a man who will help you find some way to get me off your hands. And I am anxious to let him know that I am alive and didn't desert the ship."

"Why not invite the whole damned crew of the *Tarra-*

gona to parade to my house with a band of music?" shouted the disgusted uncle. "Forget this pest of a chief engineer. It is enough to let that girl into the house. How do I know what mischief it will make? She is the kind that talks in her sleep."

Richard Cary felt wretchedly ashamed of his own futility. Sulkily he surrendered. Teresa could later confide in the chief engineer, but it was a sore blow to be deprived of his canny wisdom and aid in this extremity. The Yellow Tiger had ceased to purr. He had not been rescued, but kidnaped. He did not propose to spend much more of his life shut up in this madhouse.

He was pacing up and down next day, counting the hours. The clothes made by the handy black woman in the kitchen, white shirt and trousers, were by no means an atrocious fit. He was quite spick-and-span, a young man waiting for his sweetheart. It was late in the afternoon when the wind brought to the open courtyard the distant, vibrant blasts of a steamer's whistle. It was the *Tarragona* blowing for the wharf. He could have told that whistle from a hundred other ships. Never would he forget it, not after hearing her blow the three long blasts of departure when he had tottered up the ramp to the round watch-tower on the city wall.

Earlier in the day, Ramon Bazán had vanished on one of his shrouded errands, promising to go to the wharf as soon as the steamer should be reported. Cary grew more and more impatient. Soon he looked to see Teresa come flying in, slender, graceful, ardent to respond to his fond greeting. Then she would turn her attention to the wicked old uncle who was making a jail of his house and holding her Ricardo against his will. It would be a lively scene.

A carriage was heard to stop in front of the house. The

young man dared not show himself, but retreated to his room, as caution had taught him to do. He was chagrined at being found in such a plight. He was like a stranded hulk. But if Teresa still loved him, nothing was impossible to attempt and to achieve.

Uncle Ramon Bazán came teetering in alone, very much put out and wheezing maledictions. Richard Cary advanced from the threshold of his room, grievously disappointed, but expecting to hear that Teresa had been delayed until evening. Her uncle made no effort to break the news gently.

"My trip to the *Tarragona* was for nothing. I lost my breath climbing on board that ship and there was no Teresa at all."

"She was not in the ship?" blurted Cary. "What's the answer to that? What did the chief steward say?"

"That pig of a Swiss said she had left the ship in New York. He didn't know why. A good stewardess, he called her, when she was not chasing herself about something else."

"And no word to explain why she wanted to quit or where she went?" implored the lover.

"Not one word, Ricardo," said Ramon, his bald head cocked sagaciously. "These infernal girls! They can make a Yellow Tiger look like a sick house-cat. But why should I laugh? There were such girls when Ramon Bazán was a gay *caballero* — Good God, how long ago it was — and he was never afraid to see the ears of the wolf if the prize was an embrace and a kiss. Teresa, though, she was never a girl to be a fool with the men. Not a coquette, I will say that much for the jade. She was fond of you, Ricardo. My old eyes told me that."

Richard Cary stood massive and composed. The uncle's

tirade was the sound of empty words. They buzzed without biting. He could not believe that Teresa was faithless or forgetful, fleeting though the romance had been. Sadly mystified, he was not one to be dragged adrift by an ill wind. His convictions were stanch. Such was his native temperament. Because Teresa had found some reason for leaving the ship in New York, it did not mean that she had forsaken him. He would find her some day and then it could be explained.

"I am badly disappointed, sir," he said to her uncle. The boyish smile was wistful as he added: "I couldn't see beyond to-day. Never mind. Teresa Fernandez is wise enough to steer her own course. Now, my dear Señor Bazán, I am finished with Cartagena. I'm head over heels in debt to you for all your kindness, but I must be on my way. I never fell in a hole that I couldn't pull myself out of somehow. If you will help me, I shall be more grateful than ever."

It was not mere bravado. The time had come to force the hand of the benevolent old despot. The reply to this ultimatum was a sardonic chuckle. The mirth increased until it ended in spasms of coughing. Cary pounded the brittle Uncle Ramon on the back and almost broke him in two. It was exasperating to listen to him. He wiped his eyes, adjusted his teeth, and motioned the young man into the library. There the exhausted Señor Bazán curled up in a chair like a goblin and began to elucidate himself as follows:

"To laugh at a broken-hearted lover is abominable, Ricardo. I reproach myself and implore you to forgive a funny old guy. It is selfish of me to feel so pleased, but I hope to make you understand. That girl was in the way. To me she was an obstacle. I could do nothing with you

until her ship came in. And then I was afraid of her entangling you against me. With a man and girl, everything must be talked over together. 'Will I do this?' 'Should I do that?' 'What does she say?' I tell you, dear Ricardo, the women spoil more bold men than they ever make heroes of. For the present we are happily rid of Teresa. You will be fool enough to follow her later, but that is none of the funeral of Ramon Bazán."

Richard Cary thrust his grieved disappointment into the background. Here was promise of reading the riddle of his detention. The old man had never been so ablaze with excitement as now. He caught his breath and volubly continued:

"It filled my mind when I first saw you, Ricardo — you were the man I had been looking for — the man I had to have. And then I lost you, the worst luck that ever was. When that lame fellow, Palacio, came down from La Popa with your letter, I tell you I rejoiced myself. You were crazy to find that Teresa, I could see it between the words, but it was the best of fortune for Ramon Bazán. Since you have been in my house, Ricardo, I have watched you, to measure you up, and I was right as could be, on that very first night. You are the man I want. Not so many bats in my *cabeza* as the saucy Teresa has told me to my face! When you know what I want you for, you will not sigh and look sad and talk about bursting out of Cartagena. You will be glad of the day when you came to live with Ramon Bazán."

"Show me any road out and I will swamp you with my blessings," exclaimed Cary, immensely diverted. "I knew you had something up your sleeve, but there I stuck. Now, for the Lord's sake, please get down to brass tacks. Then I can tell you whether I'll take it or leave it."

"Come over to my desk," cried Señor Bazán, as agile as the little brown monkey. "Now sit down and listen. You do that very well. It is a virtue worth its weight in pure gold. I have observed it in you. Have you read much about Spanish treasure? Have the legends fascinated you?"

Richard Cary jumped from his chair. The words had wrenched him out of his solid composure. All he could say was, like a deep-voiced echo: "Spanish treasure? Has it fascinated me? How did you happen to hit the mark like that?"

This quick vehemence startled Señor Bazán. It was unexpected. This new Richard Cary, aroused and masterful, was, indeed, like having a great yellow tiger in the house.

"Ah, ha, Ricardo, you smell the trail? You have dreamed of finding Spanish treasure? This is better than I hoped for. It might be a captain that sailed with El Draque as you stand there with eyes on fire."

"With Drake?" exclaimed Richard Cary, his arms folded across his mighty chest. "Aye, Señor Bazán, there was treasure for the men that sailed these seas with Frankie Drake. Here at Cartagena, though it was like pulling teeth to make the fat Spanish merchants give up their gold."

Señor Bazán was a trifle dazed. This amazing young man whom he had handled so carefully, with such solicitude to gain his good-will and gratitude, was fairly running away with him. He did not have to be coaxed or persuaded. This was already obvious.

"Dead stuff?" laughed Cary. "You have it in the books on your shelves. But I enjoy talking about it — how Drake and his seamen used their long pikes in carrying the

barricadas in the streets after they made a breach in the wall. It was merry work while it lasted. Six hundred Englishmen to take the strongest town in the West Indies! There was a swarm of Indian bowmen with poisoned arrows that played the mischief with them. The town had to yield after Master Carlisle, the lieutenant-general, slew the chief ensign-bearer of the Spaniards with his own hand. They fought as pretty a duel with swords as ever a man saw. And all for what? After Drake and his men took their pleasure in sacking and spoiling the town and setting fire to a great part of it, the ransom they obtained was no more than a hundred and ten thousand ducats. A beggarly adventure that laid a hundred and fifty lads on their backs with wounds and fever."

Señor Bazán sucked in his breath with a greedy sound. He was squirming in his chair. Here was a topic he could never tire of. His heart's desire was revealed.

Richard Cary pleasantly rambled on, yarning of Spanish treasure like a sociable Elizabethan mariner in a waterside taproom. He was carried away by his own enthusiasm. The way was cleared for the cherished secret of Ramon Bazán. Ricardo was in a mood to respond and sympathize. He would not scoff at an old man's dearest ambition that had long possessed him, body and soul, that had vivified old age and decrepitude with the magic of youth's illusions.

Señor Bazán was careful to lock the library door before seating himself at the desk. From a drawer he withdrew a folded document much crumpled and soiled. His fingers fumbled with it. He was pitifully agitated. Cary stood leaning over the desk. He foresaw the nature of the document. Ramon Bazán delayed unfolding it. The habit of secrecy was not easily broken. He preferred first to explain what was more or less known to the picaresque race

of modern treasure-seekers. It happened to be new to Richard Cary's ears. He drank it in with gusto, while humming in his brain was an old sea chantey:

"Why, I've seen less lucky fellows pay for liquor with doubloons,
And for 'baccy with ozellas, gold mohurs, and ducatoons!
Bring home! Heave and rally, my very famous men!"

Still clutching his precious document, old Ramon Bazán chose Lima for the beginning of his long-winded narrative. During the last days of Spanish rule on the west coast, this capital of Peru had been the lordliest city of the vast domains won by the *conquistadores* and ruled by the Viceroys. Founded by Francisco Pizarro, it was for centuries the seat of government in South America. The Viceregal court was maintained in magnificent state, and the Archbishop of Lima was the most powerful prelate of the continent.

Here the religious orders were centered and to Lima the Inquisition was removed from Cartagena. Of the incredible amount of gold and silver taken from the mines of the Incas, much remained in Lima to pile up fortunes for the grandees and officials, or to be fashioned into massive adornments for the palaces, residences, churches, and for the great cathedral which stands to-day to proclaim the grandeur that was Spain's. To Cartagena its walls, to Lima its cathedral, runs the saying.

When Bolivar the Liberator had succeeded in driving the Spanish out of Venezuela and had also set up the free republic of Colombia, the ruling classes of Peru took alarm, which increased to panic as soon as it was known that the revolutionary forces were organizing to march south and assault Lima itself. There was great running to and fro among the wealthy Spanish merchants, the holders

of political offices under the Viceroy, and the gilded aristocracy which had ruffled it with riches won by the swords of their two-fisted ancestors. It was feared that the rebels of Bolivar and San Martin would loot the city and confiscate the treasure, both public and private, which consisted of bullion, plate, jewels, and coined gold.

The people of Lima, hoping to send their private fortunes safe home to Spain before the plundering invaders should make a clean sweep, put their valuables on board all manner of sailing vessels which chanced to be in harbor. A fugitive fleet of merchantmen steered away from the coast of Peru, the holds filled with gold and silver, the cabins crammed with officials of the Church and State and other residents of rank and station. In the same manner was sent to sea the treasure of the great cathedral of Lima, all its jeweled chalices, monstrances, and vestments, the weighty gold candlesticks and shrines, the vast store of precious furniture and ornaments which had made this one of the richest religious edifices in the world.

There had not been so much dazzling booty afloat since the galleon fleets were in their heydey. Gone, however, were the dauntless buccaneers and gentlemen adventurers who had singed the beard of the King of Spain in the wake of Francis Drake. The best of them had sailed and fought and plundered for glory as well as gain, for revenge as much as for doubloons. Their successors as sea rovers were pirates of low degree, wretches of a sordid commercialism who preyed on honest merchant skippers of all flags and had little taste for fighting at close quarters. The older race of sea rogues had been wolves; these later pirates were jackals.

Many a one of these gentry got wind of the fabulous treasure which had been sent afloat from Lima and there is

no doubt that much of it failed to reach Spain. While in some instances these fleeing merchantmen were boarded and scuttled by pirate craft, in others the lust of gold was too strong for the seamen to whom the rare cargoes had been entrusted. They rose and took the treasure away from their hapless passengers whose bodies fed the fishes.

Among these treacherous mariners, and the most conspicuous of them, was one Captain Thompson, of the British trading brig *Mary Dear*. He received on board in the harbor of Lima as much as six million dollars' worth of gold and silver. The black-hearted Captain Thompson led his crew in killing the Spanish owners once the brig was out at sea. Instead of sailing south around Cape Horn, they steered northward in the Pacific and made a landing on lonely Cocos Island.

There the booty was carried ashore and buried until such time as these villains could safely plan distribution and escape. Wisely preferring to stay at sea, Captain Thompson joined the crew of a well-known pirate, Benito Bonito, who also had bloodied his hands with this Spanish treasure. He had captured a rich galleon off the coast of Peru and two other vessels bearing riches sent from Lima. On Cocos Island, at the advice of Captain Thompson, he buried some of his treasure, in a sandstone cave in the face of a cliff. Then he laid kegs of powder upon a ledge close by and blew great fragments of the cliff to cover the cave. In another excavation he placed gold ingots, seven hundred and thirty-three of them. They were ten inches long and four inches wide and three inches thick. With them were twoscore gold-hilted swords inlaid with jewels.

The records of the British Admiralty show that Benito Bonito's ship was captured by *H.M.S. Espiègle* which was cruising in the Pacific. Rather than be hanged in chains,

this affluent pirate gallantly blew out his brains. At this time Captain Thompson was no longer sailing in company with him and so saved his own wicked skin. One rumor had it that he was garroted in Havana, under another name, with eleven of his old crew of the brig *Mary Dear*. Other curious stories indicated that he flitted in obscurity from port to port, in mortal terror of Spanish vengeance and never daring to disclose the secret of Cocos Island . . .

CHAPTER XII

RICARDO WRITES A LETTER

Such was the narrative as old Ramon Bazán poured it forth with various impassioned digressions which included cursing the souls of Captain Thompson and Benito Bonito. Excitement made him pepper it with Spanish phrases that had to be translated. The effort sorely taxed his vitality. As Richard Cary said to himself, it was like a boiling kettle. The lid had blown off.

Artfully the climax had been withheld. With the gloating affection of a miser in a melodrama, Señor Bazán spread his creased, soiled document upon the desk. He guarded it with both hands as if Cary might snatch it and bolt for the street. A chart, as the young man had anticipated — a ragged island roughly sketched — the depths of water marked in fathoms — shore elevations shown by fuzzy scratches like caterpillars — sundry crosses and arrows and notations in figures. Here and there the penmanship was almost illegible. Time had faded the ink. Dirt had smudged the sheet of yellowed paper ripped out of some old canvas-backed log-book which might have belonged in the doomed *Mary Dear*. Ramon Bazán poised a skinny finger over a symbol inked between two hills and piped exultantly:

"Six million dollars in gold and silver and jewels, Ricardo. And here is the cave where Benito Bonito hid the ingots."

Cary picked up a reading-glass and studied the sheet of paper with the eye of a professional navigator. The chart was the handiwork of a seaman, this he speedily concluded.

The compass bearings were properly marked, the anchorage for a vessel noted with particular care, and a channel between the reefs indicated by heavier lines of a pen. The rest of the chart was cryptic, impossible to make head or tail of without prolonged examination. It was interesting but not convincing to Richard Cary who had heard of similar treasure charts. Seafaring men gossiped about them. They turned up every now and again, in the possession of credulous dreamers who swore them to be authentic.

There were excellent reasons, however, for avoiding skepticism in discussing this prodigious marvel with Señor Bazán. Here was Richard Cary's chance to put the walls of Cartagena behind him, his one tangible hope of salvation. And he was not a man to hang back from seeking Spanish treasure as his next gamble with destiny.

"Where is this Cocos Island?" he asked.

"Only two hundred miles from the coast of Costa Rica," instantly answered Ramon. "You see, it is a short voyage through the Canal and into the Pacific. You will not have to climb a tree, like El Draque, to look at the great South Sea. You are wondering why I should have so much faith in this chart? I am easily fooled? Well, then, it will cost a great deal of money to pay for a ship and a crew to go to Cocos Island and dig up the treasure. Nobody ever saw Ramon Bazán spend a dollar unless he knew what he was doing. They call him the stingiest old tight-fist in Cartagena. To get ahead of him you must rise before the cock crows."

"Yes, it will cost you a good many thousands," agreed Cary. "Do you mind telling me why you feel you have a sure thing in this treasure chart?"

"It is fair to ask me that question, Ricardo. When did the *Mary Dear* sail away from Lima? One hundred years

ago, and a little bit more. One hundred and three years ago. This chart was given to me by my father. He lived and died in Cartagena, and he was eighty-six years old when he died in this house. It was always *mañana* with him, and he had business that tied him to the grindstone. He had dreams of going to Cocos Island. Figure it for yourself, Ricardo. This chart came to him just one hundred years ago. Will you laugh at me if I say this chart was given to him by Captain Thompson himself?"

"In Cartagena I believe anything and everything," gravely acquiesced Richard Cary. "You couldn't make me bat an eye to save you. The fever downed this Captain Thompson, I presume, while he was dodging under cover, and your father befriended him. That is how it should work out."

"Exactly that! Truth is funnier than fiction," cried Ramon Bazán, bobbing up from the desk. "My father had the kindest heart in the world. This stranger was dumped on the beach from a Mexican privateer which came in for fresh water. The man was ill and almost dead. My father took him into this house. He died in the room where you now sleep, Ricardo. A merchant captain, he said, whose ship had been wrecked off the Isle of Pines. Just before he died he told the truth, which is a proper thing to do, Ricardo. One should always make his peace with God. Then it was that my father received the chart and learned the whole story of Captain Thompson and the *Mary Dear* and the partnership with the pirate Benito Bonito."

"I'm in no position to pick flaws in it," said Cary. "I could tell you wilder ones than that. And you actually have a ship in mind to sail for Cocos Island and you want me to take her there?"

Ramon Bazán seemed to have some sudden difficulty

with his articulation. He opened his mouth. His eyes bulged. His gestures were aimless as he faltered in a high key:

"The ship will be ready — the ship will be — will be — will be —"

His voice died in his throat. His face was contorted in a spasm of agony. He toppled across the desk, his hands drumming against it.

Richard Cary stood dumbfounded. This was the devil of a new complication! The possible consequences raced through his mind. Ramon Bazán dead in his library — *El Tigre Amarillo Grande* hiding in the house — a fatal snarl of circumstances from which there could be no possible release! Fantastically it occurred to him that the old man could not die in this tragic manner because the galleon bell had not intoned its ghostly forewarning.

Delaying only an instant, Cary ran to the kitchen shouting for the black woman who might know what should be done. She took it calmly, waddling into the library, making the terrified young man understand that Papa Ramon was subject to such seizures. In a small cabinet she found a vial and shook out two capsules. These she rammed between the suffering man's lips and crushed them against his teeth. Like a miracle, the acute anguish subsided. It was his heart, *mucho malo.*

The corpulent negress picked him up in her arms like a baby and laid him upon the bed in his room. With a menacing finger under Cary's nose, she dared to berate him. Topics of conversation more soothing were necessary to the welfare of the fragile old Papa Bazán.

Shunted aside, Richard Cary retired to a wicker divan in a cool corner and smoked his pipe while he took account of stock. He was nervous. Said he to himself:

"Big as I am and hard to jolt, I can stand just about so much. Here is one bet that I did overlook. Why didn't the old boy tell me he had a balky heart? Supposing his clock stops before he gets me out of this jam? Whew!"

After some time, he tiptoed into the stricken man's room. It was delightful beyond words to find him propped up with pillows and sipping a stiff glass of rum and lime-juice. He was a forlorn little object, more shriveled and brittle than ever, but his eye was brightening again and he mustered a shadowy grin. Soothingly Cary suggested:

"Thinking it over, sir, you ought to turn this business of the voyage over to me as soon as you can. You don't want to pop off before we even sight Cocos Island. I agree to go, of course. Now where is your ship and what is she like? I am competent to take hold."

"Thank you, Ricardo," murmured Papa Bazán, with a long pull at the rum. "It was too much excitement. Sit down, if you please. We can talk quietly, like two pigeons. I knew you would agree to go with me, whether you wanted to or not. I had you by the hair of the head. But unless I have won your confidence, unless you go willingly, you can desert the ship at Colon and then where am I? I am bright enough to see that far."

"I promise to stand by," said Cary. "In the first place, it is a matter of honor. Perhaps you did kidnap me to serve your own ends, but that doesn't lighten my obligation. I have no intention of getting out from under it. You have made a pampered guest of me, and now you offer me the one chance of oozing out of Cartagena with a whole skin. In the next place, I'm eager to go to Cocos Island with you. We'll see the thing through. And there's that."

"Then I am a well man, as spry as a tarantula," sputtered Ramon Bazán. "Have you a master's license,

Ricardo? It will concern the insurance on my steamer. I can't afford to risk heavy loss. All the money I can scrape together will be in this voyage."

"Yes, I hold a master's ticket. And I'm fed up with twiddling my thumbs, so let's go to it. What do you say?"

"But I can't turn the ship over to you until she is ready to go to sea, at the very last minute," lamented the owner. "You will have to be sneaked on board at night and hidden until the steamer is ready to sail, or the Colombians in the crew will jump over the side. One look at *El Tigre Grande* and — *adios!* Ten hundred things have I had on my hands to arrange, and do you wonder at my bad heart kicking a flip-flop?"

"I shall pray for your health, believe me," devoutly returned the nervous young mariner. "Now about this steamer —"

"She is very awful to look at," was the frank admission. "A German tramp that was interned four years at Cartagena! I bought her cheap, Ricardo. Rusty and afflicted with heart disease and other things, she will not sink if the weather is kind. But you yourself could never make the mistake of thinking she was the *Tarragona*. I have found a crew for my shabby harlot of a *Valkyrie*. Not such men as you will love, Ricardo, for I must take what I find. They must hear not a whisper of Cocos Island. It is a trading voyage to the west coast. The ship will clear for Buenaventura, a Pacific port of Colombia."

"We'll drive that condemned old crock along somehow," cheerfully responded Richard Cary. "When do we sail?"

"A few days more, my captain. A little coal to put in and boiler tubes to be plugged. Coal is cheaper at Balboa. We can fill the bunkers there. As Heaven hears my voice,

Ricardo, unless we find the treasure this voyage will ruin poor old Ramon Bazán."

The interview had taken a turn that was not good for a damaged heart. The owner of the *Valkyrie* was growing excited. Cary thought it best to let the details rest. The old gentleman's health interested him enormously. It was like carrying a basket of eggs along a very rough road.

The breakable Papa Bazán insisted on getting into his clothes next morning and seemed little the worse for wear. It was quite apparent that he had not been running around in aimless circles while preparing for his romantic voyage. He was amazingly capable of getting what he wanted, and without the eternal delays of his native clime. Those who now did business with him found his pertinacity as vexing as the itch.

The *Valkyrie* was a small vessel, of nine hundred tons, which had flown the German flag in the coasting trade of Colombia and Venezuela until gripped by the greedy hand of war. Corroded and blistering, a sad orphan of the sea, she had slumbered at an anchor chain in the lagoon of Cartagena until rashly purchased by Ramon Bazán after a season of dickering and bickering to make a New England horse-trader jealous. When he found how much repair work was unavoidable, his heart almost stopped forever. What made it beat again was the stimulus, more potent than capsules, of the six millions of treasure of the brig *Mary Dear*, besides those seven hundred and thirty-three gold ingots piled in the cave by the arithmetical Benito Bonito.

A west coast trading venture to make his old age something more than dry rot and stagnation, publicly explained Ramon Bazán. A whim of this erratic old codger, the Cartagena merchants found it mirthful. A guardian should

interpose before he squandered all his money. A few critics argued to the contrary. In his prime Ramon Bazán had been famous for shrewdness. Who could tell? He might have something up his sleeve. The problem of raking a crew together caused more speculation. Cartagena was a languid seaport. Most of the commerce had been diverted to Porto Colombia. The American beach-combers who drifted in from the Canal Zone were more or less of a nuisance. It was one of these that Ramon Bazán had put in charge of his ship as chief officer while fitting for sea. A captain would join the *Valkyrie* later, he vouchsafed.

"What do you know about this chief officer, Señor Bazán?" asked Richard Cary.

"If I knew more I should like him less," was the peevish reply. "He calls himself Captain Bradley Duff. Rough and tough, eh? He commanded ships, to hear him say so, but I think he lost his ticket somewhere. He had a job with the North American Mining Company at Calamar for a little while. A large, important man, Ricardo, with blossoms on his nose, and a very red face — his belly is round and his feet are flat. He has a big voice and a whiskey breath. But he knows a ship, and he can't graft very much because I pay all the bills. He asks why he is not made captain of the *Valkyrie*? You will understand why when you know him, Ricardo."

"I don't have to know him, thank you. You can find a frowsy Captain Bradley Duff in almost any port. They make a loud noise and throw a chesty front. Is your chief engineer the same kind?"

"No. I was lucky to find him. A long, thin boy, younger than you, Ricardo, and with manners courteous to an old man. He wandered to Colombia from Boston because he had the loose foot. You know. To take a look at the

tropics. Nothing wrong with him. He was an assistant engineer in steamers between Boston and Norfolk. Down this way he was in charge of the ice plant at Barranquilla until his foot felt loose again. For two weeks he has been sweating with the engines of the *Valkyrie*, always cheerful, and he says he will hammer seven knots out of the old contraption or blow her to the middle of next week. Contraption? He made me laugh. The *Valkyrie* is just that."

For Richard Cary it was a game of blind-man's buff, with such random echoes as these to make him call it a choice between being shot in Cartagena or drowned in a coffin of a ship. It was a mad world and daily growing madder. However, he liked it, and would not have exchanged lots with the spruce Captain Jordan Sterry and the immaculate *Tarragona* punctually running her lawful schedule.

One thing troubled him, and one thing only. He could not bear to go surging off into this uncertain escapade without sending some word to Teresa Fernandez. Wherever she might be, a letter would probably be forwarded if addressed in care of the Union Fruit Company's offices in New York. He could not disclose his plans, but he could ask her to wait for him. So straitly was he fettered by circumstances that he felt bound to say to Señor Bazán:

"It is your secret, this voyage to Cocos Island. I have no idea of giving it away, but I must write Teresa before we sail. There is no harm in telling her that I have found a good berth in a ship in the west coast trade for two or three months. She knows how dull shipping is at home. I disappeared from the *Tarragona*, you remember, and I want her to understand that it wasn't my fault."

"Write her that much, then," cried her waspish uncle, "but no more, on your honor, Ricardo. Fill that girl with

all the beautiful lies you like about love and separations, but not one word about the *Valkyrie* and Ramon Bazán. By my soul and breeches, we must keep Teresa quiet. Nobody knows what she will do next. Put your letter on the desk with my letters. I will take them to the post-office when I go out to-morrow."

For a young man naturally candid and unversed in evasions, it was a mortally difficult letter to write. He hated the web of secrecy which had inexorably enmeshed him. Besides this, he was writing his first love letter, and to a girl who had vanished from his ken, beyond horizons of her own. The situation was intricate, wretchedly confused. For the time he had given hostages to fortune and was not his own free man. To tell the whole truth, to explain to Teresa that, for love of her, he had sought a hiding-place in Cartagena with a price on his head and was now off for a fling at pirate's gold to pour into her lap, this would have satisfied the normal impulses of a young man who desired to stand well in the eyes of his sweetheart.

With a sigh and a frown, and a smile now and then, he finished the task. The letter he laid on the desk of Uncle Ramon Bazán, as instructed. It was gone next morning, he was particular to notice, when the owner of the *Valkyrie* hastily departed in a carriage to pursue his harassing affairs.

What Richard Cary did not know was that his letter was not among those which Señor Bazán had casually tucked in a pocket after observing that all of them bore stamps. He may have inferred that the young man had changed his mind. At any rate, it was a detail which soon slipped from an aged and heavily laden mind. All the letters found on the desk were deposited at the post-office and this was the end of the transaction for Ramon Bazán.

The perversity of fate had assumed the guise of a little brown monkey of morbidly inquisitive habits. Early in the morning he had strayed in from the *patio*. The library was forbidden hunting-ground and therefore alluring. No doubt he was searching for Cary's briar pipe as the especial quest. From a chair he had easily hopped to the top of the flat desk. The pile of letters ready for mailing arrested his errant fancy. First he shuffled them as though playing solitaire. Then he selected an envelope at random. It crackled as he squeezed it.

The stamp in the corner caught his eye. A paw with sharp nails peeled off a corner of the stamp. He tasted it. The flavor was agreeable. Some sound in the hall just then disturbed his pastime. He tucked the one letter under his arm and took it along for leisurely investigation. It might be worth chewing for more of that pleasant flavor.

Lightly the little brown monkey frisked from the library and galloped across the *patio*. In a far corner were two large tubs, painted green, which held young date palms. Behind them was a secluded nook where the astute monkey had often hidden such objects as appealed to his fickle fancy.

Into this snug retreat he retired with the crackling envelope. Gravely intent, he tore the envelope open. He crammed a piece of it into his cheek. The taste was disappointing. He was angry. He had been hoaxed. He chattered profanely. With a grimace he tore the sheets of paper into strips. Then he tore the strips into very little bits of paper. They fluttered down behind the green tubs.

The brown monkey looked pleased. He raked the bits of paper together and tossed them in air. They floated down like petals of the white flowers when he shook a bush in the *patio*. Some of them stuck to his hairy hide. Very care-

fully he picked them off. He scooped another handful of these bits of paper and flung them up.

Soon tiring of this frolic, he swept all the bits of paper into a wide crack of the masonry wall behind the tubs. He had learned to be discreet. It was unwise to leave any traces of a foray into that forbidden library. Once it had resulted in a little brown monkey with a very sore head. Papa Bazán had used the flat of a brass paper-cutter.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MASTER TAKES COMMAND

It was the opinion of Señor Bazán that the bell of the galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* should be mounted on the deck of his own vessel. The ancient bell had once sounded the watches from the forecastle-head of another treasure ship in these same seas. Also, it possessed a legendary virtue which was not to be overlooked, that of ringing its ghostly warning when fatal disaster impended. From what he could learn of the rusty relic of a tramp steamer, Richard Cary felt inclined to endorse the old man's whimsy. It would be handy to know in advance when the *Valkyrie* intended plunging to the bottom of the Caribbean or the Pacific.

"I am too wise to believe all kinds of nonsense, Ricardo, like the ignorant people of Cartagena," said Papa Ramon, "but this bell of the galleon — how can I doubt it? And there is no bell on the *Valkyrie*, so I save some good dollars. These Colombian thieves stole the brass fittings while my steamer was empty and anchored during the war. And the galleon bell had the blessing of the Holy Church and the favor of Our Lady of Rosario so we make no mistake in carrying it on our voyage."

Richard Cary reflected, quite logically, that it was no more fantastical than pinning one's faith and fortune to a pirate's chart of Cocos Island. The whole thing might be unreal, but it had the texture of consistency. Like a satisfactory fairy tale, the improbable and the absurd were made entirely plausible. The twentieth century had very little to do with it.

And so the chief engineer of the *Valkyrie* sent two of his native helpers with a mule-cart. They unbolted the heavy bronze bell from the weather-darkened frame of Spanish oak. It clanged as they bore it out of the *patio*, a mellow note that throbbed and lingered like a phantom voice. A carpenter was instructed to set up another frame, on the roof of the forward deck-house.

The residence of Señor Bazán was to remain closed during his absence. This he had announced to the black woman in the kitchen and the faithful Indian lad. It was uncertain when their master would return. Two months' wages in advance he was generous enough to pay them, although it made him wince, and they could enjoy a vacation among their own people. They would be notified when to reopen the house. The señor who lived next door had consented to receive the green parrot and the little brown monkey. The key also would be left with him.

His energy phenomenally sufficient for his needs, Ramon Bazán made the final arrangements for departure. Richard Cary admired the tenacious sagacity with which one obstacle after another was ridden over. He himself felt more and more like a big, useless lump of a man, to have to sit and look on. Give him a ship under his feet and he would be quit of this foolish trance.

He wondered how the old man proposed to set him aboard the *Valkyrie* and hide him there until the harbor was astern. It was a nut to crack. He forbore to ask too many questions. They annoyed Papa Ramon. He was his own strategist. An uncannily strong finish he was making of it. The adventure was like a magic draught of the elixir of youth. It enabled him to hold decrepitude at arm's length, for a little while to grin in the face of the old devil of death that had so often jumped out at him from the dark.

The journey from the house to the quay was boldly and simply contrived. At eleven o'clock at night, the *muchacho* waited in the alley with a one-horse carriage. The top had been raised. Richard Cary was directed to double himself on the rear seat. He slid down as far as possible with his knees almost up to his chin. Around and over him were piled the personal luggage, rolls of blankets, canvas bags filled with clothing, folded hammocks, two or three valises, until they filled the back of the carriage to the roof.

Señor Bazán conspicuously hunched himself in front with the driver. This was the factor of safety. The old man was the passport through the streets of Cartagena where he was as well known as the Church of San Pedro Clavér and almost as much of an antiquity. Cary perceived this. Alone he had been hemmed in and helpless. Before the carriage rolled out of the alley, Ramon Bazán turned to say very softly:

"Hold out your hand, Ricardo. Here is a pistol I forgot to give you. If anything trips our plans, I don't want you to be caught like a rat. Never mind me. You just shoot your way out if you can. Run for La Popa. The lame Palacio may help you to flee to the coast or the mountains. I sent him money yesterday as a gift from you. It was your wish."

"Bless your heart, that would leave you a fine chance to square yourself with the police," gratefully replied Cary. "If I have to leg it I'll put you in my pocket. We have to see this thing through together. Cast off, *muchacho*, and full speed ahead."

The carriage rattled through the silent, galleried streets and provoked no curiosity until it approached a gateway in the city wall. A police officer in a white uniform was strolling out of a wine-shop. In the light from the windows

the carriage attracted his attention. It was moving too rapidly, the horse at a gallop. Even a young Indian driver had nerves. They were feeling the strain. He was anxious to get through that gateway. It had been much less trying to haul *El Tigre Amarillo Grande* into Cartagena under a load of wood than to haul him out again in a hired carriage.

The lieutenant of police jumped from the curb and raised his sword as a peremptory signal to halt. The despairing *muchacho*, a slave to a military uniform, laid back on the reins and jerked the horse to its haunches. The carriage stopped so abruptly that Richard Cary bounced beneath his mountain of luggage. He knew that something had gone askew. He made elbow-room to free the heavy pistol. Then he heard the petulant voice of Ramon Bazán upbraiding the officer. It was asinine to meddle with the owner of a ship in haste to go aboard and enjoy a few hours of sleep, a ship which was to sail at dawn.

The lieutenant was a young man of polished manners who now recognized this abusive old gentleman. He was about to offer a laughing apology, with a caution to drive with more care, when Ramon Bazán swayed forward, a hand plucking at his breast. He stuttered something in a queer, frightened little voice.

Richard Cary heard and comprehended. In a flash he saw the library and a frail figure toppled across the desk, face contorted, eyes bulging. Before he could toss the luggage aside, oblivious of his own predicament, the quick-witted *muchacho* had thrown an arm around the drooping old man to hold him in the carriage. A twitch of the reins, a chirrup, and the horse was in motion. It broke into a quick trot.

The lieutenant of police stared for a moment and strolled homeward from the wine-shop. Señor Bazán was

getting quite feeble, he said to himself. Silly of him to be bothering with a ship. Greedy to make more money even if it killed him!

The frightened driver steered the horse through the gateway in the wall, one arm still supporting the flaccid, silent shape of his master. In the wide, open space between the wall and the quay, the lad halted the carriage and wailed a "*mucho malo.*" Richard Cary instantly crawled out and lifted poor Ramon from the front seat. The *muchacho* threw a roll of blankets and a canvas sack on the ground. They laid the stricken man down very gently.

Cary put a finger on his pulse. It was not stilled, but the beat was faint and slow. The one hope was to search his pockets for the precious vial. Thank God, it had not been forgotten! The lad held a small flash-lamp while Cary pried open Ramon's jaw and crushed two capsules in his mouth.

They waited a few minutes. The excruciating pain was eased. The sufferer was able to whisper a few words. Ricardo was to carry him to the beach near the quay where a boat would be found. There was to be no turning back. It was a command.

Some of the luggage was shifted to the front of the carriage. This made room in the rear so that Cary could sit and hold the old gentleman in his arms. Thus they came to the deep sand at the edge of the deserted beach. The Indian lad indicated the skiff which, earlier in the night, he had placed in readiness for the stealthy embarkation. Then he stood waiting for orders. First they made a bed on the sand for Ramon Bazán. He was too weak to lift his head. Cary mercifully refrained from questions concerning the plan of action. It had been withheld from him. Childish vanity and secretiveness had made it enjoyable to lead the big Ricardo by the nose.

It was not in the mind of Ricardo, however, to let the voyage be delayed or thwarted. He would use his own wits. He tried to conjecture just how the crafty Papa Bazán had expected to turn the trick of smuggling *El Tigre Amarillo Grande* on board. It was something very deceptive and complicated, no doubt.

"I am not in his class when it comes to hocus-pocus," said the dubitating young man. "He was going off to the ship first, I imagine, leaving me on the beach until he could signal with a flash-light. Most of the crew must be ashore, for a last night in port. Well, it's up to me to play it alone. And I did hope to get clear of Cartagena without any more rough stuff. My reputation can't stand it."

Having finished this brief debate with himself, the brawny seafarer moved with an alert and easy confidence. He helped the *muchacho* stow the luggage in the skiff. Then they made a comfortable nest for Señor Bazán who manifested no more than a glimmering interest in this, the supreme exploit of his life. Richard Cary was made to feel forgetful of himself. Once at sea, Papa Ramon might rally and live to enchant himself with the pirate's chart amid the volcanic cliffs of Cocos Island. He deserved to win.

With the Indian lad in the stern of the skiff, Cary picked up the oars and drove ahead. A few hundred yards out in the dusky harbor floated the *Valkyrie*, an uncouth blotch against the stars. Here and there a light gleamed from a round port or a deck-house window. Cary aimed the skiff to come up under the steamer's stern, as the course least likely to be detected. As soon as he was close aboard he used an oar as a paddle. The skiff stole under the overhang and then slid along the vessel's side until it nudged the steeply slanting gangway steps.

Cary made fast with a turn of line and motioned the lad

to stay where he was. Then he gathered Ramon Bazán from the blankets and deftly doubled him over his shoulder. It was like carrying a helpless infant. With one hand free, Cary awkwardly footed it up the steps, steadied by a shifting grip of the side-rope. It made him puff, but the fatigue amounted to nothing.

Quietly he stepped on the deck, which was unlighted. No one hailed him. It was wisdom to look about and find his bearings. The impromptu capture of a seagoing steamer had not been contemplated in his darkest hours as a fugitive. It required some care.

The first thought was to deposit Ramon Bazán in a place where he might rest undisturbed. The living quarters would be forward of the saloon. Presumably they included a vacant room for the owner and another for the captain. On tiptoe Cary bore his burden along the deck. He found a darkened passage and entered it. The pocket flash-lamp showed him his own room, identified by a desk and the rolls of charts in the racks overhead.

This was good enough. He rolled Ramon Bazán into the bunk, after removing his coat and shoes. The old man mustered breath to thank him and then fell asleep. At a guess, he was no worse off than when he had been bowled over in his library.

Closing the door, Captain Richard Cary returned to the deck. For so heavy a man his tread was light and quick. He ran down the gangway steps and bade the *muchacho* fetch up the luggage and leave it on deck. Then he was to shove off in the skiff and go back to his horse and carriage on the beach.

Captain Cary climbed on board again and stood listening. He heard, down below, the clatter of a shovel, the pulsations of a pump, and the hiss of a leaky steam-pipe.

This was heartening. He would take the vessel to sea with daylight enough to find the channel. Pilot be hanged! There were marks and buoys enough.

In the crew's quarters, up in the bows, two or three men were quarreling over a game of cards, or it sounded like that. They could be left to their own devices. The saloon was lighted, the door open. A husky voice was bawling to the steward.

Richard Cary had to stoop to enter the small saloon. At the table sat his chief officer, Bradley Duff, and a plump, flashy young man with kinky hair and a flattened nose. An elderly mulatto in a dirty apron just then emerged from the pantry with a tray.

The late supper was interrupted, but not rudely. "Big Dick" Cary intruded his soothing presence with the air of a man who disliked violence. He received no greetings, for the reason that the three men in the saloon had suddenly forgotten what speech was for. They were as dumb as three oysters.

The blustering Bradley Duff blew a long breath through his ragged mustache. The kinky-haired young man in the pink silk shirt showed the whites of his eyes and slid lower in his chair. He seemed to be ebbing under the table. The glasses on the steward's tray jingled together. His feet were riveted to the floor.

The large, pleasant-featured visitor could not help smiling as he said:

"Good-evening, *Mister* Duff. I am Captain Cary, master of this ship."

The spell was broken. The plump young man slid lower as he murmured, "*Madre de Dios! Está El Tigre Amarillo!*" The steward wrenched his feet from the floor. They would have retreated swiftly to the pantry, but Captain Cary

crooked a finger at him. He obeyed and joined the others at the table.

Mr. Bradley Duff had not slid down in *his* chair. His mottled cheeks were puffed out. His pimpled nose was redder, if that were possible. He was a beefy, truculent figure, a man who had been valorous in his prime, before some hidden flaw had broken him. Wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he hoarsely burst out:

"Like hell you are the master of this ship, you big buckaroo! I know who *you* are — the guy that busted loose and fooled the town into thinking he was a bad *hombre*. I'm no kid to be scared by a bogeyman. You make me laugh. Master, my eye! You've gone clean bug-house. Wait till the owner comes off to-night. He'll throw a fit. I am waiting for his pet skipper."

"The owner is on board," said Cary, "but he is to be left alone until I say so. He is a sick man. We shall get under way at four-thirty, Mr. Duff. What's the word from the chief engineer?"

"You bumped into old Ramon Bazán on the beach and knocked him on the head, that's what you did," retorted the inflamed Mr. Duff. "You *are* addled if you figure on putting this stuff over on me. If you don't want to be thrown overboard, beat it. What I ought to do is put you in irons and turn you over to the police. I'll go see if Ramon Bazán is really aboard and what you did to him. If you turn out to be just a harmless boob of a lunatic, I don't want to be too rough with you."

"Stay right here in the saloon, Mr. Duff, and please keep your hands on the table. If you swell up any more, you'll break a blood vessel and then I am shy a chief officer. You will have to brace up to-morrow. You keep a rotten lookout and the ship is slack and filthy. How many men are ashore?"

"None of your bloody business," was the savage reply. "Here, I've stood enough silly play-acting from you."

Pot-bellied beach-comber though he was, Bradley Duff refused to strike his colors. He was honest in his belief that this was an unlawful invasion. There were men enough on board if he could get word to them. And at any minute a boat-load was due to arrive from the wharf. He kicked his plump companion as a signal for action. One of them might succeed in breaking for the deck to summon help.

Snatching a bottle from the tray, Mr. Duff hurled it with a mighty swing of his thick arm. Cary ducked his head. A miss was as good as a mile. To his sincere regret, he was in for a disturbance.

Before the enraged Mr. Duff could fling another bottle, Cary jumped forward and tapped him over the head with the butt of the heavy pistol. Too bad, but it had to be done! The blow was not meant to be deadly. It was enough to put the unlucky chief officer to sleep.

A pink silk shirt was streaking it for the saloon door. Captain Cary thrust out a foot and the plump young man fell. He rebounded like a ball. Catching him on the rebound, Cary called to the elderly steward:

"Do you talk English? What's your name?"

"Rufus Pilley, sah. I'se a British subjec' f'um Jamaica, if you please, Cap'n, an' I stands on mah rights to be treated right. You don't have to blam me with no pistol. At yo' service, sah."

"Bully for you, Rufus. Your views are sound. Who is this hot sport that I hold in my hands? Does he belong on board?"

"Th' secon' mate, Mr. Panchito, Cap'n, sah. You done scared him till he's green as a lizard."

"Lock him up, Rufus. The pantry will do. Step lively."

Mr. Panchito offered no resistance. It was a thing to be thankful for that the Yellow Tiger had spared his life. Having tucked him away, Captain Cary exclaimed:

"Now, Rufus Pilley, help me lug Mr. Duff to his room. He will wake up with a headache. Sorry, but it couldn't be helped."

"Thank you, sah. When you gits done an' finished with disciplinin' the crew, kin I serve you a tasty suppah, Cap'n? It looks like it's hungry wuk a-conquerin' all hands like th' way you started off."

"You are a sensible man," grinned Cary. "We'll get on well."

They left Mr. Duff in his room. He displayed no interest. Cary looked in at Señor Ramon Bazán. It was like being in charge of an infirmary. The aged treasure-seeker was awake. He demanded a nip of rum and lime-juice. It was an auspicious symptom. Rufus Pilley, very sympathetic, volunteered as a nurse for the night. He trotted off to mix the drink.

"I was afraid you were fighting, Ricardo," said Papa Ramon. "If you will bring the chief officer here, I can explain it so he will understand you are the captain."

"Oh, Mr. Duff is quiet enough," was the careless reply. "He has just turned in. You heard something smash? Mr. Duff dropped a bottle. You turn over and go to sleep again as soon as the steward brings the toddy. We are off for Cocos Island in the morning, with a westward ho and a rumbelow!"

"I am a very happy old man, Ricardo. Yes, I will sleep like a child. The ship is safe with you."

With two officers mutinous and the crew yet to deal with, Captain Cary was not as happy as Señor Bazán. He went into the wheel-house and found the voice tube to the engine-room.

"Is this the chief?" he asked.

"Yes. Who the dickens are you?"

"The master, Captain Cary. Come to the saloon right away, if you please."

"Right away, sir."

"Can you kick her out of harbor at daybreak?"

"She can do that much, Captain Cary. Come down here later and I'll make you weep."

It was the tired voice of a Yankee from down east, rare music to Richard Cary's ears. Presently the youthful chief engineer came dragging his lank frame into the saloon. A greasy cap was pulled over a shock of brown hair. The boiler suit was black with oil and coal dust. His face was besmirched like a burnt-cork minstrel. The white teeth gleamed in the smile of a rover who could not be daunted by life's rough roads. He was a tropical tramp because he liked it.

"You look to me as if old Daddy Bazán knew where to find the right skipper," said he, reaching for the water pitcher. "This is one pie-eyed voyage to the west coast, believe me. My name is Charlie Burnham, sir, and it takes a good deal to give me the yips or I'd be raving right now."

"Burnham?" said Cary. "You sound like a letter from home. There are lots of Burnhams in my New Hampshire village of Fairfield."

"Cousins of mine, I guess. Shucks, I was raised in Tobey Center, only thirty miles from Fairfield. I'm a hick from a rock-ribbed farm. It was the darned chores that made me run away, cows to milk and wood to chop and snow to shovel, and stone walls to break your back."

"Shake hands on that," grinned Captain Cary. "Is there such a place as New Hampshire on the map?"

"Gosh, you wouldn't think so. It was never like this.

Say, there can't be two men like you on this coast. You must be the bird who got mad and cleaned up Cartagena a while ago. You sure did make yourself hard to find. This looks like a nice get-away for you. I'm not butting in on your affairs, am I?"

"Not a bit, Charlie Burnham. I'm the bird. Now tell me about this unholy old hooker. What have you got for a black gang?"

"Two assistants. That's what they signed on as. Colombians. Eight nigger firemen and a couple of oilers. I can cuss in Spanish so we're doing pretty well. Short-handed, but I couldn't scrape up another damn man."

"What about the deck force? Did Mr. Duff have any better luck?"

"Half a dozen black-and-tans, Indians and such. I guess I can steal one or two of 'em at a pinch."

Charlie Burnham gulped another glass of water and fished a cigarette from a damp packet. He was eyeing the tall, fair-haired skipper with a certain grave concern. Cary noticed the change of manner and missed the brave twinkle. Something worried his valiant Yankee engineer.

"What's on your mind, Charlie?" he asked. "You can't be getting cold feet. It's a great life if you keep calm. I'll be glad to help you handle your crowd."

"Oh, I can ride those ginks, Captain Cary. I got wise to their curves when I was running the ice plant at Barranquilla. But look here, I don't want to be a false-alarm, so don't kid me. You may have a lively time getting this ship away. For one thing, this rummy of a chief officer has made no hit with me."

"I made a hit with him," gravely replied Cary, "but it may not last long. What else is in your noddle?"

"A dozen of these men are ashore, Captain Cary, and

most of 'em will be pickled when they come off to-night. They were having a pow-wow on deck yesterday. It meant nothing in my young life, but it popped into my mind just now. It was this crazy dope about *El Tigre Amarillo* — they swore he was still hiding in Cartagena — and the main gazabo of the police had offered a thousand dollars reward for the outlaw, dead or alive. One of the firemen had a poster and was reading it to the bunch. They got all jazzed up over it. You know how they go up in the air. Every mother's son of 'em was all set to grab *El Tigre* with his bare hands and get the thousand dollars."

"Flattering, I call it," said Cary. "I hadn't heard about the reward. They will try to cash in before we sail, Charlie?"

"It may be a flivver, sir, but I thought I ought to tip you off. They won't have the nerve unless they see a chance to rush you in a mob."

"Then I must keep them from getting their heads together," said Cary. "And my two deck officers are of no use to me. That is unfortunate."

"I'll say so," replied the chief engineer, "but I'll do my best to make that thousand dollars hard to collect. Sorry I must go below, sir. Be sure to give me a call when the party begins."

CHAPTER XIV

SHAKING A CREW TOGETHER

The master of the *Valkyrie* prowled on deck for some time. The two or three men in the forecastle had ceased their noise and were presumably in their bunks. The steamer was quiet. Cary regretted that he had been compelled to tap Mr. Duff on the head, but there had been no other way out of it. Quick action had been demanded or the dandyish second mate, Mr. Panchito, might have escaped from the saloon to raise an alarm.

First impressions of Mr. Bradley Duff had been more favorable than expected. He amounted to more than a rum-eaten shell of a man. There had been no cowardice in his violent rebellion. His sense of the fitness of things had been outraged, that a chief officer left in charge of a ship should be challenged by a crazy vagabond with no credentials.

On shore Mr. Duff might be a blatant ruin. To such men, however, the sea is often the breath of salvation, and its austere traditions have power to restore, for the time, the habits of courage and fidelity.

To Richard Cary the whole adventure had taken a disagreeable slant. The flavor was spoiled. He was out of the frying-pan into the fire. The tidings of that thousand-dollar reward stuck in his throat. It hadn't occurred to him that this Colombian crew might regard *him* as a treasure to be hunted with murderous enthusiasm. The shoe was very much on the wrong foot. If Señor Bazán was aware of this excessively awkward aspect, he was not

letting it fret him. His confidence in the colossal Ricardo who plucked iron bars from windows and walked out of prisons was either sublime or senile.

Could anything be attempted during the night? It would be easy enough to stay under cover until after the boat-load of firemen and sailors had returned from the town. But this would not get the steamer to sea unless — unless — yes, there was a fighting chance.

Richard Cary walked the deck, trying to fit together this detail and that. He had no fatuous intentions of storming through the ship and crushing mutiny single-handed. The chief engineer, willing as he was, ought to be left below with his invalid machinery. And any disturbance on board would be certain to attract attention on shore.

While Captain Cary, with deliberate scrutiny, was weighing and testing his plans, he heard the splash of oars and the cadenced thump of thole-pins. The ship's boat presently bumped alongside with much loud mirth and gusty argument. Cary withdrew to the wheel-house where he could watch them go forward to their quarters. They lingered in a noisy group, evidently surprised at finding no officer on watch. What was to be done with the boat? Should they hoist it to the davits or leave it in the water? One of the mates ought to be somewhere about to give orders. However, these returning mariners were weary after much liquor and dancing with the girls. They forgot the boat and stumbled forward, weaving this way and that, arms around one another, singing sentimentally.

Richard Cary counted them as well as he could. A dozen or so! Charlie Burnham must have kept a couple more on watch in the fire-room. The two or three already in the forecastle accounted for the lot. There was this to be said

for this scratch crew of Colombians. They had not run wild ashore. It had been a harmless spree.

Cary went to the gangway and turned the boat adrift. It was a needless hazard to leave it tied alongside. There should be no scrambling out of the ship in the morning to arouse the police of Cartagena. One hornet's nest was enough. Next he stole into the chief officer's room and flashed the light on him. Alas, Mr. Duff was indisposed to be an active partner. He slumbered heavily, his crimsoned nose trumpeting like a bugle. His gray hair was slightly clotted, but the pistol butt had no more than scratched it. The effect had been more soporific than serious.

Shaking his shoulder failed to stir him, although he grunted and muttered a very profane desire to be let alone. This was disappointing. Captain Cary turned his steps to the room which harbored Señor Ramon Bazán. The steward nodded in a chair. He put a finger to his lips and whispered:

"Sleepin' like he was rocked in a cradle, Cap'n. What kin I do foh you, sah?"

"Produce that supper you promised me, Rufus. I shall be kept up all night."

"Right away, sah. I didn't hear you blam no more people," hopefully observed the steward as he ambled aft. "Th' reason I has lived a long while an' kep' mah health is, 'cause I abstained mahself from fool questions. But what does you aim to do wid th' second mate, Mr. Panchito? You done lock him in mah pantry. How kin I find suppah foh you, Cap'n?"

"Sure enough, Rufus. How careless of me! What is your opinion of Mr. Panchito?"

"He ain't so worse, sah, tho' dese Colombia yaller men don't class with us Jamaica folks, in mah jedgment. Mr.

Panchito was in th' Colombia navy till th' navy filled up an' sunk one night, right smack in dis yere harbor, Cap'n. It got tired of stayin' afloat. Th' one gunboat was all the Colombia navy done was, so Mr. Panchito had to go git him another job. Um-m-m, when you come bulgin' in to-night he was so skeered his hair mighty near unkinked. It was jes' like a nightmare bustin' in on him — wid all dis say-so 'bout *El Diablo* prancin' an' ravin' through Cartagena."

"That sounds better," heartily exclaimed the skipper. "You have seen the owner of the vessel, Señor Bazán, and you know I am the lawful master. Can you talk to Mr. Panchito in his own lingo?"

"Yes, Cap'n. I was two years in a gen'leman's house in Cartagena, an' then he ups an' dies on me."

"Then make Mr. Panchito savvey that I am easy to get along with if he jumps lively."

Mr. Panchito was released from the pantry, anticipating sudden death. Nothing like this had ever happened in the navy of Colombia. When invited to sit at table with a good-humored *El Diablo* who smiled often, he plucked up spirit and found his own voice. In his heart was dismay at the thought of losing this position as second mate, with its excellent wages, and he was anxious to do anything in his power to hold it. To annoy this giant of a captain was to be rapped on the *cabeza* with a pistol butt. Mr. Panchito had not the remotest idea of collecting any thousand-dollar reward.

After a refreshing supper, Captain Cary and Mr. Panchito went arm-in-arm to the wheel-house. The chief engineer sent up the information that the first assistant, two firemen, and an oiler were on watch, to keep steam in readiness for morning.

"Hold them down there, Charlie," was the order. "Have you got a gun?"

"A sort of a one. All right, sir, I'll hold 'em here. What's the big idea?"

"Fetch me a hammer and spikes and some short pieces of scantling. I won't need the rest of the crew in the morning. Can you manage to shove her as far as the Boca Chica?"

"Sure! I sling a mean shovel myself. Nail 'em up? That's a corker."

Soon Captain Cary went forward, with Mr. Panchito, to reconnoiter. A wooden house with large windows had been built, at Mr. Duff's suggestion, to give the crew lodgings more livable in the tropics than the noisome kennels under the deck of the vessel's bow. These were so leaky that rough weather would flood them, and they were foully dark. It had been cheaper to build a shelter than to make the necessary repairs.

Mr. Panchito was eager to assist the captain's hasty carpentry by discouraging with a pistol any attempts to break out. The doors had hasps and padlocks, but these could not withstand much battering from within. Richard Cary spiked them fast with swift, powerful blows of a machinist's hammer. The noise awoke the dozen sailors and firemen. For the moment they imagined the mate was pounding to call all hands on deck. They tumbled from the bunks, crowded to the doors, and couldn't push them open.

Caramba! There was a commotion in this stout wooden coop. Bare toes could not kick through obstinate doors. The terrific hammering dinned at them. It was like being inside a bass drum. Fearfully they flew for the windows.

And now the rotund Mr. Panchito exhibited a frenzied agility. He bounded from one window to another, flourish-

ing the pistol, pushing a head back, belaboring a wriggling pair of shoulders. It was like a multiplied jack-in-the-box. He caught one limber fellow by the leg as he dived for the deck. Into the window he stuffed him by main strength. Mr. Panchito was magnificent. As a second mate he was already deserving encomiums.

Laughter made Richard Cary miss a spike as often as he hit it. He too had to gallop round and round the wooden structure which seemed to have a hundred windows and as many frantic men trying to spill out of them. Never had he heard the Spanish language so molten that it actually threatened to set a building on fire. As fast as he rammed a man inside, he slapped a piece of board across a window and whacked the spikes into it.

Mr. Panchito was running himself to death. He sounded like a whistling buoy. There was no leisure for him while those infernal heads were popping out, and *El Diablo* was at his heels. One by one the windows were made secure enough to check the eruption. Then Captain Cary had time to spike more boards across the windows. Even if the captives should pull the bunks to pieces for battering-rams, they were safely caged for the present. In their own tongue Mr. Panchito informed them through the cracks that if they cared to live longer it was essential to be as still as mice and to beseech the goodness of God on their sinful knees.

"*Mucho bueno, Capitan* Cary," exclaimed this excellent second mate whose pink shirt stuck wetly to his skin.

"One hundred per cent *bueno*," was the hearty verdict. "If the Colombian navy hadn't dropped out from under you, it would have been Admiral Panchito some day."

"*Si, señor*. Now ees what?"

"Now is what? That is as bright a remark as I ever had

put up to me, Mr. Panchito." (Cary held up two fingers.) "*Dos hombres!* Just the two of us. We must make the old steamboat, *el vapor*, vamoose from Cartagena."

"*Dos hombres? Si, señor,*" instantly agreed the second mate to whom nothing was now incredible.

They adjourned to the saloon where the steward was waiting with food and drink.

"Seems like I heard yo' conquerin' somebody else, Cap'n Cary."

"You did, Rufus. Now I've knocked off. I forgot to ask you — is there a cook to be accounted for?"

"Yes, sah. He come aboard with th' men an' is sleepin' it off."

"Please turn him out for an early breakfast. Does he have to be conquered?"

"Not him. I showed one nigger who was boss yestiddy. Um-m-m, I'se his speshul brand of Yellow Tiger."

"Then we are all checked up," said Cary. "Now, Mr. Panchito, you can siesta yourself on those cushions for an hour or two. I'll be on deck."

Dawn had no more than touched Cartagena with rosy fingers when Mr. Panchito was lifted from the cushions and stood upon his feet. Captain Cary was holding a steaming cup of coffee under his nose. The second mate rubbed his kinky head with both hands, yawned, and sighed a long "*Si, señor.*" Gently but firmly he was led forward and escorted into the wheel-house. Did he know the channel out through the lagoon? To Cary's gestures he nodded confident assent. Through the voice tube the chief engineer assured them that she could flop her propeller over if nobody spoke harshly to her. Leaving Mr. Panchito propped against the steering-wheel, Cary ran to the bow to handle the anchor winch himself.

He opened the valves and grasped the lever. Steam hissed from rusty connections, but the piston began to chug back and forth. Anxiously he threw the winch into gear. With a frightful clamor the drum very slowly revolved, dragging in the links of the cable. If the winch didn't fly into fragments or pull itself out of the deck, the anchor would have to break out of the mud.

A series of protesting shrieks from the laboring winch, a dead stop, another effort, and it was taking hold in grim earnest. The cable was coming home link by link. Cary jumped to look overside. The huge ring of the anchor came surging out of the water. The *Valkyrie* was free. Her master let the winch revolve until the anchor hung flat against the bow. This was good enough. It could be stowed later.

He waved his hand to Mr. Panchito who had drooped himself over a window ledge of the wheel-house. The pink shirt moved over to the steering-wheel. The whistle of the *Valkyrie* blew no farewell to the port of Cartagena. It would have been a foolish waste of steam.

The steamer sluggishly gathered headway, riding light in ballast. It was odd to see her heading for sea without any visible crew. Two *hombres* were in the wheel-house. Not a soul moved on deck.

Safely she avoided the shoals and made the wide circuit to swing into the narrow fairway of the Boca Chica between the mouldering, grass-grown forts. By now Captain Richard Cary was pacing the bridge in solitary grandeur. His brow was serene with contentment. The ship was heaving under his feet as she felt the swell of the wide Caribbean. He was gazing ahead.

"'Now ees what?'" he said to himself. A rumbling cough made him whirl about. Mr. Bradley Duff was cling-

ing to a stanchion with one hand. The other tenderly caressed his scalp. On his puffy features was written a bitter resentment. The night's rest had not sweetened his temper. Cary was quick to offer amends.

"I hated to have to do it, Mr. Duff. Señor Bazán was near dying in my room, and I didn't dare jolt him with any more excitement. You refused to listen to me —"

"I went in and saw the old gentleman just now," grumpily replied the chief officer. "He set me straight about you. I didn't air my troubles. He has chirked up quite a bit. But what was the sense in all the hush stuff? Why didn't the old coot tell me you were coming aboard to take command? Do you think I'd 'a' blabbed it ashore? It was nothing to me if a big Yankee sailorman had enjoyed beating up the town."

"You wouldn't have blabbed when you were sober," said Cary. "It was the Colombian crew that made Señor Bazán nervous. They had some foolish notions about me."

"And so you boxed up the crew, Captain Cary? That is a new one on me. And now you will have to turn 'em loose. How about that?"

"Not a thing to worry about, if you feel like turning to, Mr. Duff," was the cheery assurance.

This compliment so astonished Mr. Duff that he blew his mustache like a walrus. He tried, with no great success, to push his chest out and pull his stomach in. His bleary eye brightened as he ripped out:

"Hell's bells, young man, we'll show 'em who runs this ship. Of course they may refuse duty and try to make you put back. Seems to me I heard some mention of a thousand dollars reward for you. It went in one ear and out the other. I never needed money bad enough to dirty my hands by

crimping a fellow Yank in a foreign port. You'll take my word for that."

"I believe you, Mr. Duff. Then I will release the men and set the watches, if they behave themselves."

"One moment, Captain Cary," growled the beachcomber. "You bent a gun over my crust last night, and I'm willing to forget that, which is very handsome of me. But you insulted me professionally and I feel hurt. You called it a filthy ship. Let me tell you, I was commanding smart vessels when you were a clumsy pup. You don't know what I have had to contend with in this blistered old scow that ought to be scrapped. The owner hollers murder when you ask him for paint. Now you back me up and I'll make this ship so clean you can eat off her decks. You can't tell me one bloody word about a chief officer's job."

"I apologize," smiled Cary. "It was unfair of me. I snapped it out before I thought. Go to it. Between us we'll shake the crew down."

The swag-bellied Mr. Duff was pacified. He looked almost pleasant. His professional instincts had been not dead but dormant. Presently he trudged forward to pull the spikes from the doors of the forecastle house. The men came piling out, hungry and hostile. Mr. Duff's fist smote the first one under the chin. The others took the hint. They were not so rampant.

On the bridge they happened to descry the figure of a very tall and broad young man with a thatch of yellow hair that shone in the sun like spun gold. In every way he was a most unusual young man. He was looking at them with steady, untroubled eyes, as if they were no more than so many noisy insects.

This was a great surprise. The young man could be none

other than the dreaded *Tigre Amarillo* whose capture they had so gayly discussed for the fun of spending an imaginary fortune. Last night, when the boards had been mysteriously nailed on the windows, there had been frightened surmises — the man with the hammer had been ever so much bigger and more powerful than Mr. Duff — but they had later agreed that they were drunk and their vision was untrustworthy.

Swiftly now their startled minds were adjusting themselves. Their emotions were easy to read. Sixteen men in all, if they could unite — the ship was still within sight of the Boca Chica — if they couldn't manage to take her all the way back to Cartagena they could anchor inside and send a boat once they had gotten the upper hand of the three *Americanos*. The second mate and the assistant engineers were Colombians. They would be glad to aid the cause of justice. This yellow-haired monster of a man had been guilty of crimes to make one shudder.

Captain Richard Cary saw them hesitate and crowd together. He jumped down the iron ladder and shoved into the group. A knife flashed. He slapped the hand that held it. The sailor clasped a benumbed wrist. The chief officer was bravely collaring them. It was no more than a flurry. They were given no time to organize and act cohesively.

"Hustle 'em along, Mr. Duff," said Cary. "Breakfast be hanged! Send the firemen below. Put your sailors at work. Keep all hands moving. Give me a good man to relieve the second mate at the wheel. We are too short-handed to stave any of them up. So be as easy as you can."

"Here is a quartermaster, sir," panted Mr. Duff, jerking his thumb at a chunky fellow with a boil on his neck.

"Aye, I'll just take him along," said the skipper.

With this he grasped the quartermaster around the waist, deftly flipped him head down and heels up and, thus reversed, tucked him under one arm. Encumbered in this manner, Captain Cary strode for the wheel-house where he stood his spluttering quartermaster right end up and cuffed him erect. He was shown the course on the compass card in the binnacle. He gripped the spokes with the most zealous sincerity. He had no other thought in the world than to steer an absolutely correct course. Neither to the right nor left did he glance.

The steamer's speed increased to five knots. The chief engineer, still at his post, called through the tube:

"All the firemen came tumbling down at once, Captain Cary. They are awful sore about no breakfast. This bunch of mine would sooner eat than fight."

"I'll send grub and coffee down, Charlie. Can you stand by two or three hours longer? Things are smoothing out."

"Sure I can. These engines interest me. I just sit and wonder what makes 'em go. Come down when you get a minute."

"Right-o, Charlie boy. It looks like a happy voyage, even if we did get off to a bum start."

Soon Mr. Duff lumbered to the bridge to report:

"I am going to feed my animals directly, sir. They are washing down with the hose and scrubbing for their lives. A smart ship, by the time we slide into the Pacific! The second mate refused to go off watch. He bounces after the men and damns their eyes if they turn their heads to spit. The only moment Mr. Panchito took off was to shift into a purple silk shirt and a necktie with yellow spots."

The routine set in motion, Richard Cary went in to visit the invalid Señor Ramon Bazán. He was sitting up in bed. Joyously he piped:

"A life on the ocean wave, Ricardo! I am a man ten years younger. And the ship has sailed with no trouble at all. How is my fine ship and my great captain?"

"Not a care in the world," was the genial reply. "Everybody earning his wages and the course set for the Isthmus."

"Bend your ear down, Ricardo mine. Softly now. There is no whisper of our secret plans? They know nothing about the treasure chart and Cocos Island?"

"Not a suspicion, Papa Ramon. To Buenaventura for orders and thence with cargo."

"What kind of a crew is it to trust when we find the six million dollars and the gold ingots? This is the only thing that has worried me, Ricardo. I could do no better for a crew in Cartagena. This chief officer, Bradley Duff. Will he be a bad egg?"

"Right as can be. You can't always judge a man by his looks and manners. As for the crew, there will be no trouble with them."

"El Draque has come again to the Spanish Main," said Ramon Bazán, fondly regarding his commander. "Remember now! The treasure chart is wrapped in the rubber cloth, under my shirt, Ricardo. Now take me into my own room and you get yourself all settled comfortably in here where you belong."

To the *Valkyrie* came a breathing spell. Outwardly she was an unlovely little ocean tramp which had seen much better days, plodding along the Colombian coast on some humdrum errand to earn a pittance by begging cargoes from port to port. Her discolored sides rolled to the regular impulses of the sea and the propeller blades flailed the water into foam. A banner of black smoke trailed from the shabby funnel and spread behind her in a dirty smudge.

The early morning weather had been kind to these argo-

nauts. During the forenoon, however, Mr. Duff cocked a knowing eye at the barometer and sniffed the warm breeze. It was damper than he liked. His feet pained him more than usual. His broken arches had warned him of more than one sudden gale of wind and rain. He mentioned his misgivings to Captain Cary who received them with respect. They set about doing what they could to make things secure, swinging the boats inboard and lashing them, covering hatches, attending to odds and ends neglected in the haste of departure.

Even while they toiled, the sky grew overcast and the sea lost its sparkle. The wind veered this way and that before it began to blow strongly out of the east. It threatened to blow much harder. The crew realized that the *Valkyrie* was ill-prepared to endure furious weather. They laid aside all ideas of plotting mutiny. It was more essential to save themselves from drowning.

By noon the steamer was wallowing in a gray waste of raging water. She rolled with a sickening motion as if about to turn bottom up. The seas broke solid on her decks and poured through smashed skylights, through the leaky joints of deadlights, through weather-cracked doors. When pounded and submerged like this, the ship was not much tighter than a basket.

Leaving Mr. Duff on the bridge, Richard Cary went down to the engine-room. He found a red-eyed, haggard Charlie Burnham hanging to the throttle valve with both hands to ease her or to jam ahead when the indicator bell whirred like an alarm clock. Water was slashing over the greasy floor plates. The first assistant was up to his waist in the filth of the bilge, trying to clear the pumps of the loose coal which had choked the suction pipe. He was a small man limp with seasickness and bruises. When he

stooped over to try to claw the coal away and free the suction strainer, the water boiled over his head as the ship rolled far down.

Cary crawled over and pulled him out of the bilge. Here was a job for a man of more height and strength. He plunged in himself and was working with the energy of a dredge when Charlie Burnham slid across the floor to yell in his ear:

"The pumps are drawing a little, sir. You can clear it if anybody can. If you don't, it's good-night. We've got to keep the water down or it will put out the fires."

Cary wiped the floating grease from his eyes and grunted:

"I'll do my best to clear it, Charlie, if I have to stand on my head. How is she steaming?"

"Like a dizzy old miracle. Better than she knows how. It's lucky I held all the firemen below. They are working short shifts, but it's banging 'em around something awful."

Twenty minutes later, Captain Cary hauled himself out of the bilge. The pumps were sturdily pulling water, and the flood in the engine-room had been checked. He went into the stokehold. Half-naked men were staggering and tumbling to and fro in a fog of steam from the hot ashes and salt water. Red coals spilled out when a furnace door was opened. Frequently the wretched toilers lost their footing and were flung headlong. Arms were seared with burns, bodies contused.

When the captain of the ship suddenly loomed among them, they cowered from him, dropping slice bars, letting coal fall from their shovels. Their nerves were already rasped to breaking. They were disheartened men dumbly struggling for survival against the obliterating ocean. Instead of striking and cursing them, this mighty captain was

smiling like a friend. He snatched a shovel from a half-dead fireman with a bleeding shoulder and pushed him out of the way. The shovel ate into a pile of coal on the floor and swiftly fed it into a furnace door.

The captain poised himself against the wild rolling of the ship and shot the coal into that furnace like three or four men. He was all grease and grime like themselves. He was *El Diablo* of a stoker, setting them an example to wonder at. The word passed that he had been in the bilges, making the pumps suck to save the fires. This was a new kind of captain. It restored their hope and made them oblivious of hurts and fatigue.

For some time the captain plied the shovel or raked the fires with a long slice bar. They had heard of his prowess with an iron bar. It was the truth. He handled this heavy bar like a straw. They watched him with the eager excitement of children. The ship was safe with such a captain. He could do anything. It was certain that he would preserve their lives.

When, at length, the captain desisted from stoking like a giant, he shouted a few words of Spanish at them. They were all *muchos buenos hombres*, and *viva el vapor!* It was a little storm, nothing to worry brave sailors of Colombia. They grinned and clapped their hands together. He was not a yellow tiger, but *El Capitan Grande.*

When, at length, he climbed to the bridge, the sea seemed less violent and the sky not so somber. Mr. Duff was planted beside the engine-room indicator, jockeying the ship as best he could to ward off the blows of the toppling combers. His red face was streaked with salt. A sou'wester was jammed on his gray pow. The wind whipped his oilskin coat out behind him. At a glance he was competent, a man restored to his element.

"All right, Mr. Duff," said Cary. "We have seen the worst of it. Go below and ease your feet. You may as well snooze till I call you. There was nothing I could do up here. I left the ship in good hands."

"Thank you for that," beamed the chief officer. "It shook the ship up some, but, by Judas, it's worth the damage. It shook this flighty crew together. I don't anticipate much more trouble with them."

"Neither do I, Mr. Duff. This gale has blown some of the nonsense out of their heads. I think we can make it a contented ship."

Sunset found a quieting sea and a dying wind. The *Valkyrie* was on her course for Colon. After a while the second mate came up to relieve the captain and let him snatch a few hours of sleep. Richard Cary waited a moment. A sailor paused beside the wooden house in the bows. Upon the roof was mounted the bronze bell of the galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. The sailor pulled a cord and the ancient bell rang out the hour, *dong-dong — dong-dong — dong-dong — dong-dong!* Eight bells!

"All's well and westward ho!" said Richard Cary, the sense of illusion stealing over him. "It's still the same. Ships have changed, but men are the same. And the game is still worth playing."

CHAPTER XV

IN THE HOUSE OF MYSTERY

Only to Mr. McClement, chief engineer of the *Tarragona*, had Teresa Fernandez made known her intention of leaving the ship at the end of the voyage. Never again did she wish to see the walls of Cartagena and the white moonlight in the plazas, or to hear the wind in the cocoanut palms and the bells in the church towers. The thoughtful McClement did not try to dissuade her. Convinced as she was that Richard Cary had been wickedly done to death, it was not a decision to be argued. Her plans were uncertain, she said. If she were fitted to earn a living ashore, she would not go to sea again. The sea made her sad.

She had a last talk with McClement the night before the ship was due at New York. It was a farewell, he suspected. Teresa had resolved to break all ties with the *Tarragona* and her shipmates.

"Will you let me look you up in New York?" he asked. "We might have dinner together, or something like that. If I can cheer you up a bit —"

"Thank you very much, Mr. McClement. I will let you know where to find me if I need you. On your next trip to Cartagena you may hear something — of how — of how it happened, but you will never find Mr. Cary."

"I can't be so cock-sure of that, Miss Fernandez. As I have insisted right along, a man like Dick Cary doesn't vanish without a trace. Colonel Fajardo is the blighter for me to keep an eye on. He will be looking for you on the ship, won't he? Hot after you again, I fancy. He may give

himself away. He will be badly upset when he finds you have stayed in New York."

"Do you truly expect to see Colonel Fajardo waiting on the wharf in Cartagena, Mr. McClement?" demanded Teresa. Her face was solemn, her dark eyes very large, her hands clasped. She was urged against her will to discover what this loyal friend might hold secluded in the secret places of his understanding. Sometimes he frightened her, he seemed so wise and penetrating and yet vouchsafed so little. To her tense question he replied, laying a hand on hers:

"No more of that, my dear girl. You must be up early when the ship docks to-morrow morning, so it's time for you to say your prayers and go to bed."

"Ah, yes, I always say my prayers," she breathed in low tones. "And will you remember to say a prayer for the soul of poor Teresa who found her lover and lost him so soon?"

"God may be a trifle surprised at hearing from a perfect stranger," he answered, with his cynical twinkle, "but I am always at your service, Miss Fernandez."

"It will comfort me," said she, "to know you believe I am still good — in spite of — no matter what — no matter what — oh, Mr. McClement, I am such a very, very unhappy woman."

She sobbed the words. For the first time her proud and righteous composure had broken. It was the realization that in all the world there was no one else than this man who could comprehend her, in whom, if needs be, she could unreservedly confide. He was a link, as faithful as forged iron, between the brief joy of which she had been bereft and the dark perspective of the future.

McClement made no comment. He knew when silence

was golden. Teresa quickly regained her poise. The display of emotion had been like the swirl of an eddy on the surface of a deep, swift stream.

"To have a second mate left on the beach means so little in a great fleet of ships like the Fruit Company's," said she. "The captain will report him absent from duty, and it is soon forgotten. Mr. Cary was a new man in the service — a stranger — they scratch him off the list. And you have packed his clothes in the two bags, Mr. McClement? And all the little things that belonged to him?"

"Yes. I found his home address — a letter from his mother. I kept it for you. Shall I send the stuff to her, or what? How about waiting another trip?"

"Wait for what?" Teresa exclaimed. "Mr. Cary is dead, I tell you. Colonel Fajardo killed him. How else can it be — think, Mr. McClement, two days the *Tarragona* was at Porto Colombia, and two days at Santa Marta loading bananas — a whole week on the coast before we sailed for Kingston. And the Company's radio stations at those ports! I have told you this over and over again. Can you imagine Mr. Cary alive and not sending a radio to me — to the captain — to explain why he was missing? It is impossible. A whole week on the coast and then to Kingston."

"I grant you all that," replied McClement. "It has knocked the props pretty well from under me. What about Dick Cary's mother? There's the rub."

"His things ought to be sent to her, I suppose," said Teresa. "What else can we do? And who will write to her? You or I? Maybe the port captain who hired him will send her a letter. I don't know about that. But Mr. Cary is nothing but a second mate that jumped his ship."

"Writing his mother! Humph!" grunted McClement.

"What the deuce is there to tell her but to sit tight and hope for news? My word, but it *is* a rotten situation for her, isn't it?"

"I am the one to write a letter to her," said Teresa. "And I will tell her why. It is because I loved him, and was ready to die for him."

Troubled sleep and wakeful hours were Teresa's portion during this last night in the ship which had long been her home. The blind instinct of flight had driven her to break these familiar bonds. Abhorrent was the thought of returning to the long wharf at Cartagena with the ugly cargo sheds and the tapering masts of a Colombian schooner lifting beyond them. There was the fear that somehow she might betray herself, that out of the very air accusation might be directed against her.

She felt neither guilt nor remorse, but she was too young to die. And it would be hideously unjust if she should be taken and put to death for what she had done. Not by chance had she been delivered from punishment. The miraculous decree of fate had sheltered and absolved her.

She wondered if the evil spirit of Colonel Fajardo haunted the narrow strip of wharf beyond the cargo shed, waiting, waiting for the ship to bring Teresa Fernandez back to Cartagena. The unholy vision could not be thrust aside — the gaunt figure and the harsh, cruel face bleached with sudden terror — the whip-like crack of the little pistol — the strangled scream of "Jesus, have mercy" — the splash just astern of the schooner and the patch of frothy water with the widening circles . . .

Unpleasant and distressing, such a crimson page of remembrance as this, but not to be regretted or moaned over. Such was Teresa's inflexible verdict. Raging more than once, grinding her small white teeth, she had been

sorry that Colonel Fajardo had only one death to die. The Holy Office of the Inquisition would have known how to make it more lingering.

These thoughts would leave her alone, she hoped, as soon as she should have seen the last of the ship which had been so intimately associated with him.

There was something more troublesome, and she could see no way to meet it. Write a letter to the mother of Richard Cary? What in the name of God could she, Teresa, say to his mother by way of explanation? What could she tell the mother of a noble son? That he was dead? How? Where? Why? Where was the proof? Who had buried him and where was his grave? He was dead. This was all Teresa knew as she had read it in the hard eyes of Colonel Fajardo, in his twitching smile, gloating, gratified, unable to dissemble his own secret. But a mother of a son — and such a son — here was a wall of difficulty that loomed to the sky!

While the passengers were landing next morning, very impatient to run the gantlet of the customs inspectors and hurl themselves into taxicabs, Miss Fernandez was the efficient, light-footed stewardess with a blithe word and a quick readiness to aid the ladies and amuse the children. She turned aside from her duty only to accost Mr. McClement and say:

"Leave Mr. Cary's things with the baggage-master on the wharf, to be sent for. This is my advice. They must not go to his home in New Hampshire till I write the letter. It is going to be a very hard letter to write. Good-bye, dear friend, good-bye."

At her leisure she packed her trunk and shook hands with her good comrades, the purser, the doctor, the second steward, and the wireless operators, who expressed them-

selves as broken-hearted to a man. She was saucy to Mr. Schwartz, the bullying chief steward, and boxed his ears when he would have chucked her under the chin in token of an amicable parting.

From the ship she went to the office of the port steward and demanded her wages, also a first-class recommendation. These were promptly handed over. No longer a stewardess in trim uniform, with white cap and apron, Miss Fernandez reappeared in a small hotel below Madison Square where she would be unlikely to encounter passengers and officers with whom she had sailed.

Her savings banks books were a substantial anchor to windward. She had done well for herself at sea. There was little faith in Uncle Ramon Bazán's promises of leaving her his property. He had too many bats in his aged *cabeza*. Meanwhile she had dreaded being cast on a lee shore of adversity and having to ask his help. There would be a string to it, as she said, that she would have to go and live in his Cartagena house, with the detestable brown monkey and the squawking green parrot and an uncle who had a worse temper than either.

There were friends in New York, but she did not care to see them. They were mostly South Americans or seafaring people. Her intention was to rest a while and then to look for another position as stewardess on some route removed from the Caribbean, perhaps the Spanish line to Cadiz or a Lamport & Holt boat to Buenos Aires.

Prudent with her money as she was, she permitted herself the pleasure of buying some new clothes, preferring to dress in black. The results were admirable. She had excellent taste. A simple elegance distinguished her. It was partly an inheritance. There was a certain exotic charm about her, the eyes, the hair, the coloring of her race.

She was not so vivacious, alas, as when Richard Cary had wooed her in the tropics. At times she was like a nun, in moods pensive and wistful.

Day after day she postponed writing the letter to the widowed mother of the tall, ruddy son who had been so carelessly confident that nothing could harm him. The longer the delay the more impossible it became to put pen to paper. At last she ceased to deceive herself in the matter. That letter would never be written by Teresa Fernandez.

The dilemma held her like a vise. Every passing day was a merciless turn of the screw. Inevitably she was compelled to try to put herself in the mother's place. Therefore she came to perceive, more and more clearly, that her flight from Cartagena had been futile. She had fled from the deed she had done, but there were consequences which she could neither flee nor evade.

In putting herself in the mother's place, Teresa had to deny that Richard Cary was dead. What mother would accept such a message as anything more than flimsy conjecture, as meaning anything at all? A mother's impulse would be to fly to Cartagena herself or to send some one. She would have to *know* before the tenacious illusions of hope could finally be extinguished.

For Teresa Fernandez to allow herself to hope was to destroy the whole fabric of her justification. Even the faintest whisper of hope and she was no longer absolved. She had killed Colonel Fajardo because he had deserved to die, because otherwise he would have gone unpunished. He was guilty. Of this she had been as certain as that the tides flowed and the sun set.

But this certainty could never convince Richard Cary's mother. And in her heart of hearts did it entirely convince Teresa Fernandez? During the voyage northward to New

York she had been visited by visions of hope. They had come not in her waking hours, however, but when she was asleep and dreaming. Then had Richard Cary appeared to her, masterful and tender, his deep voice vowing that he loved her, aye, for much longer than a little while. She had felt his kisses warm on her lips and his arms holding her close.

Cruel, empty dreams she had called them, but now they took substance and seemed to be calling her. For Richard Cary's mother and for her own sake, she discerned that she must go back to Cartagena. It had been necessary for her to leave the ship and seclude herself amid different scenes where she might be solitary and detached. Now she was thinking clearly, recovered from that impulse of flight and concealment that had driven her away. It was ordained that she should go back to Cartagena in order to try to bring to light the hidden circumstances. She could do nothing else than attempt it. By sea or land she could find no peace or sanctuary.

A fortnight in New York sufficed to rid this conclusion of its fears and hesitations. It was the sequel, logical and unescapable, of the verdict which she had privately inflicted upon the wicked Colonel Fajardo.

Winter had gone. It was in the month of April when Teresa made this voyage to the southward. The tourist travel had slackened. There were few tired business men and restless wives and daughters. Teresa was fortunate enough to be given a stateroom to herself. She was also alone at a small table in the dining-saloon. It would have made her happier to have been helping the stewardess, who was a heavy, middle-aged woman with twinges of rheumatism.

There were novels to read, long hours in a deck-chair,

and the chat of casual acquaintances. The men tried to flirt with her and found it wasted time. The voyage was something to be endured in quietude, with all the patience she could summon. Her courage was equal to the undertaking.

Apart and silent she stood, with an air of grave serenity, when the ship passed in through the Boca Chica and slowly followed the channel of the broad lagoon. The Colombian customs officials would come aboard and summon the passengers for Cartagena into the saloon to check them on the list and examine their passports. This was what Teresa was inwardly dreading. If suspicion had followed her departure, she would learn it now.

A new *Comandante* of the Port entered the saloon. He was a white-haired, kindly man wearing spectacles. Importantly he scrutinized the purser's papers and ticked off the names with a pencil. Teresa sat watching him. He had not come to her name. One little white shoe tapped the floor with a quick pit-pat. Otherwise she appeared calm. He held the pencil in air and exclaimed:

"Señorita Teresa Fernandez."

Glancing over his spectacles, he perceived her sitting there. In tones of surprise he repeated the name. She flinched and held her breath. Rising from his chair, the *Comandante* crossed over to her and put out his hand. It was a friendly gesture. With a sigh she took the hand he offered. Her fingers were as cold as ice.

"It is an agreeable surprise, my dear young lady," said he, "to find you among the passengers, bound homeward to Cartagena. I welcome the lovely niece of my friend Señor Ramon Bazán."

Teresa murmured words vaguely polite. The *Comandante* returned to his papers. He was fussily preoccupied.

Presently Teresa slipped away to her room, there to remain until the other passengers had disembarked. She wished to have no reunions on the wharf with friends who had come to see the steamer arrive.

The barrier had been safely passed. She was free to enter the city as a woman innocent of suspicion so far as the officials were concerned. No information had been lodged against her, or the *Comandante* and his harbor police would have summarily detained her.

In the heat of the day she hired one of the carriages at the gate and was driven to the residence of her uncle. She would tell him what her errand was, to search for tidings of Richard Cary's fate. With a will to help her, Uncle Ramon might be able to burrow beneath the surface of things. In years gone by he had pulled strings in the complex politics of the city, and was still respected in certain quarters for the things he knew and didn't tell. Crochety as he was, she thought he was really fond of her when she refrained from teasing. And he had expressed an unusual liking for the big second mate of the *Tarragona*.

Teresa rang the bell of the ancient house with the rose-tinted walls and the jutting gallery. Expectantly she waited for the Indian lad to come pattering through the hall, or the shuffling slippers of Uncle Ramon himself. Again she pulled the brass knob. She could hear the echoing jingle of the bell. It awakened no response in the silent house. Possibly they were asleep, her uncle, the *muchacho*, the fat black woman in the kitchen. It was early, however, for the siesta. Uncle Ramon should now be eating the midday breakfast in a shady corner of the *patio*.

This was a situation awkward and unforeseen. She had taken it implicitly for granted that her funny old uncle would be found in his house because he had always been

there. To her he was a lifelong habit and fixture, growing no older or more infirm.

While Teresa stood on the pavement, the carriage waiting with her trunk, the neighbor who lived next door came strolling home under an enormous green umbrella. He was a courtly, bland gentleman with grayish side whiskers who was manager of a bank and had large commercial interests in the interior of the country. Teresa had known this affluent Alonzo de Mello ever since he had been wont to carry her across the plaza upon his shoulder and toss her squealing into a clump of plumed pampas grass. He was her uncle's financial adviser and loyal friend, ignoring his twists of temper.

Teresa walked along the pavement to meet him. His green umbrella was a familiar sight. Now it was like a beacon in troubled waters. At sight of her, Alonzo de Mello swept off his hat with the graceful homage of an *hidalgo*. He was a gentleman of the old school. Very much surprised he was to see Teresa. Kissing her on the cheek, as was his privilege, he sonorously exclaimed:

"Old Ramon told me you had failed to come south in the *Tarragona* last voyage, my child! Come into my house and have breakfast. The family will thank me a thousand times for bringing you."

"And as many thanks to you, dear Señor de Mello," replied Teresa, grasping his arm as they walked with the umbrella over them, "but I must find out how to get into my uncle's house. I came to make him a visit and the house is locked as tight as a jail. Where is he? What do you know? Is anything wrong?"

"The house is closed. He has gone away," answered the banker, with an oddly perplexed manner. "Ah, you have your trunk in the carriage, Teresa? Then stay with us. I beseech it of you as a favor."

"I knew you would say just that, Señor de Mello, but if you don't mind I shall stay in my uncle's house if there is any way to get into it. He must be coming back soon. Where has he gone? What has become of his two servants?"

"You are a girl not to be cajoled if her mind is made up," smiled the affectionate neighbor. "Wait, if you please, while I get the key. Uncle Ramon left it with me. Let the driver carry in your trunk, if you insist. Then you can run in and out as you please and have your meals with us. Your uncle's servants have been sent away, you ought to know, until he returns to the city."

Señor de Mello was obviously fencing with the story of Uncle Ramon's curious departure, as if it might require considerable explanation. Teresa was mystified, but she asked no more questions until the banker came back with the heavy iron key. At his heels galloped a little brown monkey squeaking its annoyance at something or other. Teresa eyed it with dislike. She knew that monkey of old. It was not to be mistaken for any other wretched monkey in Colombia. It pulled at her skirt with tiny black paws and would have frisked to her shoulder, but she thrust it away with her foot.

"Little imp of the pit! You are no friend of mine. It is beyond me how my uncle could bear to part with you."

The monkey grinned at her, showing every tooth in its head, and it was a most malevolent grin. Tail looped over its back, it scampered into the house ahead of them, casting back proud and hateful glances. This house belonged to it. These two persons were intruders. Into the silent *patio* scampered the monkey and went hand over hand up the trellis from which it swayed in a contemptuous manner.

Teresa was not interested in the antics of little brown

monkeys. She went into the library. It was clean and orderly. The other rooms had been left in the same condition by the faithful servants.

"Yes, I think I will stay here, Señor de Mello. It will amuse me to keep house, after living so much in ships. Just now I am tired. I have not been feeling as strong as usual. Will you excuse me from calling on your family till later in the afternoon? I had breakfast on the ship."

"As you say, Teresa. You have everything here for your comfort. You will dine with us to-night, of course. And now where has your uncle gone? Let us sit down? Your uncle is self-willed and like a mule to handle, as you know. And an old man must not be crossed too much. In the inscrutable wisdom of God, our Ramon Bazán took it into his head to become a shipowner and engage in the west coast trade. A bolt from a clear sky, I assure you, when he came to me to turn his securities into cash and finance the affair. He insisted on buying the old *Valkyrie* some time ago, very secretly, before he announced what he proposed to do with her.

"You remember the small German tramp steamer, Teresa, that was idle so long in the harbor. Then suddenly he told me he had decided to make repairs and go to Buenaventura for a cargo. It took much more money than he could afford to invest in such a scheme, but I could not refuse to get the funds together for him. My advice amounted to nothing. Objections drove him quite frantic. He had the bit between his teeth. Restless, craving change and excitement before death snatched him, he hit upon this foolish enterprise."

"He did not tell you everything," wisely observed Teresa. "I have not the slightest idea of what was in his ridiculous mind, but he expected to bring back more dollars

than he spent. Uncle Ramon was never an idiot when it came to his precious money."

"I called him an idiot," said Señor Alonzo de Mello, "and he grinned precisely like that monkey on the trellis. So away he sailed and that was the last seen of him."

"What did he do for a crew?" asked Teresa, the deep-water mariner. "And where did he find a captain?"

"He picked up a man called Captain Bradley Duff, and Cartagena was very well pleased to get rid of him. All the vices of the famous Anglo-Saxon race and none of its virtues were visible to the eye. An unsanctified swine of a wind-bag, down at the heel, who had been annoying this coast for some time."

"Captain Bradley Duff?" said the disgusted Teresa. "He was kicked off the wharf when I was in the *Tarragona*. He came on board and tried to borrow money from the officers and passengers. Then he got drunk in the smoking-room. And this is the man that my uncle took as captain in his old steamer? You were too soft with Uncle Ramon, my dear sir. He is in his second childhood. You should have locked him in a room and given him some toys to play with. Has anything been heard of this *Valkyrie?*"

"Yes, she passed through the Canal. I interested myself to find that out, but she is not yet reported as arriving at Buenaventura. I feel some anxiety, for soon she will be overdue."

"There will be gray hairs in my head if I sit here in his house until he comes back," cried Teresa, in a sudden gust of anger. "He has gone the good God knows where. May He protect the silliest voyage that a ship ever made! Yes, Señor de Mello, I think I had better stay alone for a while this afternoon and reflect on what I am to do."

As the good Señor de Mello bowed himself out, it es-

caped his notice that the little brown monkey was still roosting on the trellis. Teresa, also, was unobservant. She had discovered that the galleon bell had been removed from its framework of Spanish oak. This was more food for speculation. It was fairly easy to fathom, however, for one who knew Señor Ramon Bazán and the history of the sonorous bell of *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*. It had been his notion to take the bell along in his steamer by way of precaution. Quite sensible of him, thought Teresa, but to be regretted because with the bell still in the *patio* she might have been told if any catastrophe was about to put an end to her erratic old kinsman.

While Teresa was pondering this odd discovery, the monkey descended to the floor and bethought himself of some urgent business of his own. With a furtive glance at Teresa, who paid no attention, he scuttled into a corner where two green tubs had formerly stood. The cocoanut palms had been carried into the house of Señor de Mello that they might not perish of thirst. The monkey was exceedingly indignant, as his language conveyed, at finding his favorite depositary of loot disturbed.

There was the wide crack in the masonry, however, where he had hidden the fragments into which he had torn the letter purloined from the library desk. Into this crevice he now inserted a paw and found what he so anxiously sought.

It was a briar pipe with an amber bit, the choicest treasure acquired during a long career of zealous burglary. The huge guest of Papa Bazán had forgotten the pipe that night when he had gone away in the dark. A prize beyond compare for the covetous monkey who had found it in the library next morning and had fled to hide it in the safest, surest place he knew!

Then he had been violently snatched away and kept as a captive in the house of Señor de Mello, and there had been no chance to retrieve the briar pipe. He had been sitting at the top of the trellis wondering what made him feel so sorrowful and uneasy. At last he had remembered. It was the pipe, tucked away in the crack of the wall behind the green tubs.

In a happier frame of mind the monkey wandered across the *patio*, the pipe held firmly between his teeth, a finger in the bowl. He had the air of one for whom solace waited if only he could find a match and a pinch of tobacco.

Teresa caught sight of this absurdly gratified monkey with the pipe in its mouth. She gasped and sprang to her feet. Like a flash she dived to catch the horrid beast, but he flew from under her hands and raced for the nearest room. Teresa was after him. She picked up an empty flower pot and hurled it. The aim was wild, but the crash was startling. The monkey's nervous system was so shaken that he dropped the pipe and vanished beneath a bed.

The panting Teresa swooped for the pipe. She was laughing hysterically. She could not believe her eyes. She fondled the pipe, turning it over and over in her hands. It was the pipe which once before she had rescued from the pest of a monkey, when she had brought Richard Cary from the ship for an evening call on her uncle.

This briar pipe was unmistakable. There were the initials neatly carved on the side of the smoke-blackened bowl — *R. C.*

She put a hand to her head. Richard Cary had taken the pipe back to the ship that night. She was certain of this because she had insisted upon cleaning it before he smoked it again. She had forced a jet of steam through it in the

pantry, and then had sent it to his room by a cabin steward. Ricardo had returned his thanks. This had been her last word from him.

Later in the evening, about ten o'clock, he had gone ashore. A quartermaster had seen him walk off the wharf and through the custom-house gate. Betwixt that time and the present, then, he had been in the house of Uncle Ramon Bazán. The pipe was evidence unquestionable, or so it appeared to her confused sense. But if Richard Cary had been in her uncle's house since leaving the ship that last time, why had he sent no word to explain his absence? Why had her uncle kept silent?

Both joy and anguish overwhelmed her. The room went suddenly dark before her eyes. Never before had she fainted.

CHAPTER XVI

BLIND ROADS OF DESTINY

Joy in the belief that Richard Cary had not died that night in Cartagena! Anguish that she, Teresa Fernandez, had stained her hands with blood for which there had been no justification! She felt herself falling, falling, falling into unfathomable depths while a fateful little monkey sat and grinned at her.

She found herself lying on the stone floor which felt cool against her cheek. Lassitude overpowered her like a drug. A few feet away was a long wicker chair with chintz cushions, a chair to recline in if she could make the effort. She dared not try to stand. Like a child that had not learned to walk, she crept to the chair and, for lack of strength, knelt with her head on a cushion. A few minutes more and she was able to lift herself into the chair and lie relaxed, grateful that she was no longer falling, falling to dreadful darkness.

The brown monkey had watched her from his hiding-place. He was as unpitying as destiny itself. All that interested him was the briar pipe which had slipped from Teresa's fingers. There it was, on the stone floor, near where she had so suddenly and curiously concluded to lie down for a short time. Very cautiously he peered around the bamboo screen and scratched his hairy hide. The woman appeared to sleep in the long wicker chair. It was worth risking a bold sortie. Nothing venture, nothing have!

The monkey advanced in a series of short dashes, ready to retreat on the instant. He was still nervous from the crash of that hurtling flower pot. A fragment had nicked

his bald rump. A final leap, and he pounced on the pipe and silently fled out into the *patio*. Having fled to a safe distance he informed the woman what he thought of her.

The woman was not as indifferent as the thievish little beast surmised. It was her intention to recover that blackened briar pipe with the initials, *R. C.*, neatly cut on the side of the bowl. Her slender body was still a prisoner to weakness, however, and so she watched the monkey, through the doorway of the room, as it gamboled insolently with the pipe between its teeth.

Ere long it sauntered over to the corner where the two green tubs had been, assuming a specious air of indifference. Apparently the woman had forgotten his existence and was enjoying her siesta in the long wicker chair. The monkey examined the wide crevice between the stones where his treasures had been habitually concealed. After an absence it was advisable to take account of stock.

Some other recollection, also a pleasing one, haunted his simian intelligence. Into the crevice went an eager paw. It raked out one handful after another of tiny white bits of paper and let them flutter. He brushed them together as they fell and tossed them in air. They came drifting down like the petals of the small, white flowers when a certain monkey was scrambling up a favorite trellis.

Amusing enough, but soon tiresome. This monkey was apt to suffer from ennui. Giving thought to the matter, he picked up the pipe, rapped it on a stone, and then stuffed the bits of paper into the bowl. It was expertly done, a few bits of paper, and a finger tamping them down. This had been the custom of the tall man with the yellow hair who had been kind enough to leave the pipe behind him.

Solemnly the monkey waited for the fascinating smoke to curl from the bowl. He waited rather anxiously because

he was very much afraid of fire. Teresa Fernandez thought it time to interfere. She could see that wide crack between the stones of the wall, and she did not know how deep it might be. If the malignant little devil of a monkey should thrust Richard Cary's pipe in too far, for safe-keeping, it might drop between the stones and be lost to her forever.

She cried out sharply, insulting the ancestors of all monkeys. This one jumped as if he had been shot and spun about, hiding the pipe behind its back. Teresa was rapidly regaining strength. Indignation goaded her to action. Reaching out an arm, she caught up a book from a small table and let it fly through the doorway. It fell short of the mark, but hit a galvanized watering-can. Bang!

The monkey leaped into the air. He was sensitive to shocks. This woman was determined to seek his life. If it was the briar pipe that made her so ruthless, then he would let her have it. Better a live pauper than a dead monkey! Only the gods of the jungle knew what she would be throwing at him next. A bombardment of those explosive flower pots and books that went "bang" might put an end to his career. Old Papa Bazán had a temper, but he was never like this.

Thereupon the mistreated monkey dropped the pipe and sped at top speed to a far part of the house, into the vegetable bin beyond the kitchen where there were burlap sacks to pull over one's self. The atmosphere of home had been ruined by a hateful, alien presence in petticoats.

Her mind slightly relieved, Teresa called herself a useless girl for yielding so weakly to a fainting spell. It was the breaking strain, but she was by no means ready to surrender to the impact of circumstances. She walked into the bathroom and let the water run cool in the basin. She splashed her face and temples and laved her wrists. This

was no time to indulge in hysteria or to let her wits be tangled. It was a mercy that she could be alone in this empty house until the late hours of the afternoon.

Soon she felt strong enough to cross the *patio* and regain possession of Richard Cary's pipe. It had intimately belonged to him, a companion of his night watches in all the ships he had known. He had told her this. Perhaps he had thought of Teresa when he had smoked his pipe on the rocking bridge of the *Tarragona* under the star-spattered skies of the Caribbean.

Now she caressed the pipe with the palm of her hand until the bowl shone like polished teak. With a hairpin she fished out the crumpled bits of paper which the monkey had so painstakingly rammed therein.

Here was a queer thing. She was quick to notice it, and as quick to deduce its immense significance. When she had cleaned the pipe for Ricardo, that last night on shipboard, she had dug out the evil-smelling dottle in order to put steam through it and blow out the nicotine. It had been a labor of love.

Teresa knew as much about pipes as a man. She had listened to many shipmates deliver orations or wrangle over the merits of their pet briars or meerschaums, their clays and corn-cobs. She had watched them carefully scrape the burnt cake when the bowl was almost filled.

Ricardo's pipe had been almost clear of this charred cake, as hard as coal. This she remembered because it had been easy to clean it. He must have been busy with his knife not long before that, as men were accustomed to do when there was almost no room for tobacco in the bowl.

But this same briar pipe, as she now held it in her hand, was caked and foul. It had been smoked a good deal since she had last seen it on board the *Tarragona*. A pipe could

not get in this condition unless it had been smoked longer than a day or a week. Why, it was time to dig out the bowl again and cut away the black, hard cake. Here was something very engrossing to study, enough to make a girl ever so much flightier than Uncle Ramon Bazán in his maddest moments.

Merely the tobacco ash burned hard in a briar pipe, but in the random alleys of life, no incident is so small that it can be called negligible. The little brown monkeys of chance momentously meddle with the affairs of humankind and pass gayly on.

Teresa Fernandez found a resting-place on the bench near the frame of the galleon bell. Her senses were awakened to their normal alertness. Who else than Richard Cary could have been smoking this pipe? Not her Uncle Ramon! He had forsaken his black, rank cigars after two or three heart seizures had almost popped him into his grave.

"Ricardo has been here," she said to herself, "and he must have stayed some time. I could be no more certain of it if he told me himself."

She tried to banish the specter of her own frightful situation with respect to the man she had slain on the wharf as an act of retribution. This must await its turn. Unless she could control her mind to this extent, she was hopelessly, helplessly befogged and adrift, without chart or compass. Why had Ricardo failed to return to the ship? Why and how and whither had he vanished again, from the house of Uncle Ramon Bazán? These were the questions she was first compelled to grope with. Her intuitions might be feminine, but life had taught her the logic of cause and effect. When the occasion required, she could be as practical as a navigator working out his sights.

"They went away together, Ricardo and Uncle Ramon," she thought aloud. "It has to be so. Uncle Ramon knew better than to hire that worthless Bradley Duff to command his steamer. When so much money is risked, you can't fool him as easy as all that. It is hard to find officers in Cartagena. In a pinch, Bradley Duff may have been signed as a mate, but not as a captain. I know my old uncle very well. He would never trust himself, much less his ship, to a notorious beach-comber who has nobody's respect.

"It was Ricardo who went as captain. Señor de Mello is mistaken. How does it happen that he never mentioned Mr. Cary to me to-day? How could they be in the two houses side by side and Alonzo de Mello not know Mr. Cary was going to sail with my Uncle Ramon? The second officer of my old ship, the *Tarragona?* Why, it would have been at the end of Alonzo de Mello's tongue to tell me how my uncle had such a fine officer with him. Nobody could forget Ricardo if they met him only once."

Teresa ceased to be logical for the moment and veered to sentiment by way of shadowy consolation. She went on to say to herself:

"Buenaventura! A lucky omen, perhaps. It means good fortune. That is the west coast port they sailed for? One of the little English ships that captured the great galleon of my ancestor, Don Juan Diego Fernandez, in Cartagena harbor, was the *Bonaventure.* And how grand and fierce Ricardo looked when I was telling him how my brave ancestor fought in his golden armor. He frightened me. Bad luck for Don Juan Diego Fernandez, but good fortune for the Englishmen! And Ricardo is one of them. He is not like a Yankee at all."

Good fortune? Could there be such a thing in God's

world for Teresa Fernandez? The spirit of Colonel Fajardo had indeed risen from the muddy waters of the harbor to claim its vengeance and reprisal. Teresa's will was still strong enough to hold this issue in the background. Let it fasten a grip on her and she was lost. Time enough for that struggle.

Broodingly she considered another issue intimately more vital. Had Richard Cary truly loved her? Had she been more to him than a passing fancy, a pretty girl to kiss, another sweetheart in a new port?

With never a word to explain his desertion from the ship, with never a message of any kind during these intervening weeks, it would seem that he had forgotten her. He had left her to wonder and to grieve. What a tragic fool she would have been to write a letter to his mother, breaking the news that her precious son was dead in Cartagena!

Thus Teresa sadly argued with herself, but love and logic cannot be mated. She loved Richard Cary with an unwavering constancy. And her belief that he cared for her in the same way might be shaken, but could not be destroyed. He was the soul of candor. His simplicity was as massive as a mountain-side. Honesty was in him if ever it dwelt in any man.

The fateful brown monkey, unhappily secluded beneath the burlap sacks in the vegetable bin, had reason for ironic mirth. Those crumpled scraps of paper in a corner of the *patio* — if the woman had been wise enough to smooth them and try to piece them together, a word or two here, a phrase there, she might have found the answer to her question.

Absorbed in her study of the briar pipe, Teresa had paid no heed to the scattered bits of paper so minutely torn by a monkey's busy fingers. They had failed to impress her as

bearing any resemblance to the remains of a letter. She went from room to room, searching for sign or trace of the occupancy of Richard Cary. There might be something else besides his pipe. The search yielded nothing at all. The library desk was vainly ransacked. The waste-baskets had been emptied. There was absolutely nothing anywhere to indicate that Uncle Ramon Bazán had entertained a guest.

Weary and bewildered, Teresa threw herself upon the bed in the coolest room. It would be an ordeal to have to meet Señor Alonzo de Mello's family at dinner, but it could not be avoided. There were questions to ask him. She had to know more about the singular voyage of her Uncle Ramon. Where else could she try to find information? Uncle Ramon's two servants, of course, the Indian *muchacho* and the negress who had cooked and slaved for him. José and Rosa were all the names by which she knew them. She was in ignorance of where either lived. It might not be in Cartagena at all. Unless Señor de Mello could help her, it might be impossible to find the two servants. Then, again, if the furtive Uncle Ramon had been guarding some secret, as it seemed plausible to assume, it would have been like him to bind José and Rosa to silence after his departure.

This house held a secret. It concerned Richard Cary. This was as far as Teresa could grope in her labyrinth. But it was not her habit to hesitate and grope for long. She would take a path and follow it to the bitter end, once the choice of direction had been made.

It was a long, long afternoon to spend in this silent house that refused to whisper its secret. Teresa drowsed off more than once, dreadfully tired and feeling the heat after the passage across the Caribbean and the strong wind that was almost always blowing there, whistling through a ship's

stays, whipping the blue surface into foaming surges, blowing beneath a hard, bright sky: the wind with a tang to it, the wind that Richard Cary had so zestfully drawn deep into his lungs, standing with arms folded across his mighty chest.

It was a breath of this same wind that came, at length, and drew through the long windows of Ramon Bazán's house when the sun was going down. It stirred the sultry air. Teresa dropped her fan. She would take her bath and do her hair and put on the evening gown of black lace which had been her one extravagant purchase in New York. The household of Señor de Mello dined with a certain amount of formality.

When she was dressed, Teresa remembered the odious monkey which had betaken itself into retirement. She could never coax it into following her next door. Señor de Mello would have to intervene. She refused to spend a night under the same roof with it. She went to close the door into the rear hall. This would keep her pet aversion penned in the kitchen quarters.

The breeze had increased and was buoyantly sweeping through the *patio*. It caught up the bits of torn paper and whirled them like snowflakes. Teresa noticed them because she hated the slightest disorder. She had been disciplined in the immaculate routine of well-kept ships in the passenger trade. Flying bits of paper annoyed her. It was too late to sweep them up. They were drifting hither and yon.

Now that they had attracted her attention, she called herself a stupid fool for neglecting to examine them in the first place. She had been thinking of something else. Was there writing on them? She stooped to catch a few bits as they eddied to the floor. One or two fluttered behind a bench. Others settled in the dusty basin of the fountain.

In the open court the light of the sky was failing. She took the bits of paper to a lamp.

So small and crumpled that it seemed a waste of time to pore over them, they bore the marks of a pen. This quickened her curiosity. She had never seen Richard Cary's handwriting, and therefore this could not be called a definite clue. But this was not her Uncle Ramon's crabbed fist. It was a vigorous hand that had driven the pen hard.

Malign luck, perversity, the influence of a little brown monkey, call it what you will, so ordered it that the breeze failed to waft to Teresa even one fragment which might have brought her precious consolation. All it required was a bit of paper with her name or some remembered word of endearment, or a broken hint to be interpreted. What she found herself able to read were such meaningless words as these, "*and will*" — "*so he*" — "*wish I*" — "*you told me.*"

"If Ricardo wrote this, as perhaps he did," said Teresa, "why was it thrown away? Or was it a letter from somebody else to my uncle, and the monkey found it in the waste-basket? And I might have had all the pieces to puzzle over! Too late now. Some of the scraps have flown out of the windows. For such stupidity I deserve to have the devil fly away with me."

Before going out, she carefully closed the windows. Other scraps of paper might possibly reveal something in the morning.

She carried herself bravely, did Teresa, when she entered the large living-room of Señor Alonzo de Mello's hospitable home. It had been her fancy to arrange her hair not so much in the latest mode as in the Spanish fashion of other days, the glossy tresses piled high upon her head and thrust through with a comb of hammered silver. A scarf from Seville, shot with threads of gold and crimson, was across

her bare shoulders. She looked the patrician, a girl of the blood of the ancient house of Fernandez.

The welcome of Señora de Mello was affectionate. She was a plain, motherly woman with a double chin and no waist-line who found contentment within four walls, and had come to the opinion that the younger generation needed the intercession of all the saints in the calendar. Teresa she graciously excepted from this *index expurgatorius*.

Just now her only son and his wife were making a brief visit *en route* to New York and Paris for the annual pleasure jaunt. Antonio de Mello had married a Colombian heiress owning vast banana and coffee plantations, cattle ranches, gold mines, and what not. Ostensibly he directed these interests, but his real vocation was that of a sportsman, a spender, a cosmopolitan figure in the world of folly and fashion.

Teresa Fernandez stiffened when young de Mello and his wife came into the room. The daughter-in-law displayed all the latest improvements, from plucked eyebrows to no manners whatever. A thin, fretful person, beauty had passed her by. With a very bored air she said to Teresa:

"We are sailing to-morrow. So sorry you are not to be the stewardess. We came south with you last year in the *Tarragona*. As I remember, you were quite capable and obliging. Most of them are like the other servants one hires nowadays, utterly impossible."

That kindly gentleman, Alonzo de Mello, was dismayed by this crass rudeness to a guest. By his old-fashioned code a Fernandez could not demean herself. She dignified the task. Before he could voice his reproof, Teresa was heard to reply, her demeanor serene, but her eye glittering:

"Ah, yes, I remember the trip. Why not? You had the

B suite, and rowdy parties in it every night. There were ladies on board. They requested the captain to stop the disturbance. It was most unusual. A ship's good name is highly regarded."

Young Antonio de Mello perceived that his heiress had caught a Tartar. Also, he knew Teresa of old. He cleverly contrived to draw her aside, and said:

"Pardon my wife's lack of tact. Think how I adored you when we were young. And you are more beautiful than ever, La Bella Teresa. How many lovers at this moment? Be frank with an old friend."

"Only one, I swear it, thou scamp of an Antonio," smiled Teresa, "and he has run away from me."

"He is an imbecile. Then I am just in time to apply for the vacancy."

"The vacancy is in your silly head, not in my poor heart," she told him.

Before the scamp could parry this insult, his small daughter, aged five, came running in to throw herself into the arms of Teresa Fernandez. It was a joyous reunion. They had been shipmates. This explained it. Teresa was a lawful capture who had to be led jealously by the hand, away from the grown-ups, and held in audience by this devoted admirer. Breathlessly the child rattled on:

"And I can't stay up for dinner, but Mamma said I could see you for five minutes, after I yelled and wouldn't stay good. And if you don't go in the ship with us to-morrow I'll cry some more. Why aren't you a stewardess, Teresa? You know the story you told me — 'bout the jaguar that climbed right up on the roof of the peon's hut and clawed and scratched and growled *awful*, till he made a hole and tumbled in?"

"Yes, my sweet angel," laughed Teresa. "I have told

that story to lots of little boys and girls on the ship. The last trip I made as stewardess I told the story to a little boy from Bogotá. I had to tell it to him four times, and his eyes got bigger and bigger and he wiggled his feet and said, '*Oh, my*,' just like you."

"I wasn't real scared, Teresa, but I bet I can scare *you*, awful. My story is *terrible*. You'll just scream."

"Good Heavens, child, don't tell it just before bedtime," warned Teresa. "And have pity on me! Why, I shan't sleep a wink myself."

"Well, I won't make it so awful terrible then," said the small girl as she cuddled in Teresa's lap. "My nurse told it to me. It's the story 'bout *The Great Yellow Tiger* that ran *right* into Cartagena and — and what do you s'pose he did?"

"Sant' Iago preserve us! A great yellow tiger!" cried Teresa, imitating extreme terror. "Indeed, that does scare me more terribly than my spotted jaguar on the roof."

"He was looking for naughty little boys and girls," solemnly affirmed the narrator. "That's what my nurse says. And he bited iron bars off of windows to find 'em. Your old jaguar couldn't do that. All *he* could do was scratch through a straw roof with his claws. Want to hear some more 'bout the Great Yellow Tiger?"

"Not to-night, darling," said Teresa. "He is much too terrible for me. Did he run back to the jungle?"

"Yes, but maybe he'll come out of the jungle again if the boys and girls aren't as good as they can be. Glad I don't live in Cartagena."

"You will be far away across the ocean and no yellow tiger can swim after you," comforted Teresa. "Besides, you are never naughty. You tell your nurse that you don't want to hear that story any more."

"It scared you, didn't it? Oh, I have a little monkey to play with, but I couldn't find him to-day. Señor Ramon Bazán left it when he went away. Will you play with me and the monkey to-morrow, Teresa?"

"Perhaps, if you will promise not to tell me such awful stories. They make me squirm!"

The small daughter was presently summoned by her nurse. It was a tearful departure. The Great Yellow Tiger! *El Tigre Amarillo Grande!* A child's fantasy that meant no more to Teresa Fernandez than the spotted jaguar tumbling through the thatched roof of the peon's hut.

She rejoined the de Mello family and was escorted into dinner by her host. The wife of young de Mello was in no mood to make herself agreeable. Her rake of a husband displeased her the more by paying court to Teresa. He was flagrant about it. And she appeared to find it diverting. The talk had no significance, however, until Antonio chanced to remark:

"I went to the steamer this afternoon to look at our rooms. It was odd not to see Colonel Fajardo swaggering about, cursing everybody in sight. This new *Comandante* of the Port reminds me of a retired schoolmaster, tiresomely virtuous and well-behaved. Fajardo, now, was a character, wicked enough to please my taste. I miss him. What's this scandal about his disappearance? You hear the gossip of the wharf, Teresa."

"This is my first trip south since he disappeared, as you call it, Antonio. I heard nothing about him on the ship. What is the scandal?"

"Merely that he had left his girls and his debts behind him, with no farewells. He had been going the pace for years — I used to hear some wild stories in the clubs and cafés."

The elder de Mello broke in to say: "More than one jealous husband threatened to shoot him. He was beginning to break — liquor had the upper hand of him — and he fled in some kind of sudden panic, I imagine. A threat, perhaps, and his courage went to pieces."

"Strange! A born fire-eater and a soldier with a record," was Antonio's comment. "The moral is, of course, that one must be virtuous. I shall take it to heart."

"I hope so," said Teresa, "or some day you may fly away, pouf, like Colonel Fajardo, and people will say shocking things about you."

The wife of Antonio was not interested in the petty scandals of Cartagena and low people of whom she was in ignorance. She said something sharp to her husband and began to talk volubly herself, the plans for the summer in Paris, the new dances, the racy gossip concerning persons of importance. Teresa welcomed the respite. She found a glass of champagne very grateful. She had known dinner parties less fatiguing than this one. Antonio turned sulky and glowered at his wife. Teresa excused herself rather early. The elder de Mello escorted her into her own house that he might retrieve the monkey and take it back with him. This gave Teresa an opportunity to inquire, at a venture:

"Did you happen to meet the very tall, fair-haired young man, a Mr. Cary, who was visiting my Uncle Ramon before he sailed?"

"Pardon me, Teresa, but Ramon had no visitors at all. Is this Mr. Cary a friend of yours? Did he say he was expecting to visit Ramon Bazán?"

"I inferred so. I am mistaken, then? You are quite sure?"

"Positive of it," exclaimed Alonzo de Mello. "I was in

the house several times during the last fortnight before he went away, with his business affairs to look over and so on. He was alone, I am sure. He always had that air of hiding away by himself. He preferred it."

"Thank you," said Teresa. "Mr. Cary must have changed his mind."

"Who is the young man, may I ask?"

"He was an officer in the *Tarragona* for a short time. Probably you have never heard his name. I thought Uncle Ramon might have taken him in his steamer for the west coast voyage."

"I should have known it," replied the banker. "The last time I saw Ramon he told me that Captain Bradley Duff and the chief engineer were the only American officers on board."

"A pipe-dream of mine, as you might say!" exclaimed Teresa. The atrocious pun made her feel like giggling with a touch of hysteria. She controlled herself and harmlessly inquired: "Do you know where to find the two servants, if I decide to spend some time here?"

"Then you refuse to stay with us? I am afraid you must let me look for new servants. These two reported that the house was in order and gave me the keys. Where they went is beyond me. Your uncle was to send them word of his return."

"Never mind, Señor de Mello. I have not yet made up my mind what to do. It is a thing to sleep over."

He was too courteous to press her with interrogations. She was an independent girl accustomed to her own gait. Something he mentioned quite casually came like a light in the dark.

"I have instructed my agent in Panama to let me know when the *Valkyrie* reaches Buenaventura. Then you can

cable your uncle, if you feel anxious for his safety or wish to adjust your own plans. I mentioned, I think, that the steamer had passed through the Canal. She was delayed a week at Balboa for repairs after some heavy weather on this coast."

"Delayed a week at Balboa?" cried Teresa, with sudden eagerness. "I am glad he stopped to have his old ship patched up."

After Alonzo de Mello had bade her good-night, she was able to discern quite clearly the path she was to follow. She would not try to find Richard Cary with cable messages and wait and wait for an answer which might never come. Her evidence that he still lived was so slight as to be grotesque. A briar pipe and an inquisitive monkey! Her faith was scarcely more than the substance of things hoped for. She was ready to swear on the cross that she had read his death in the gloating eyes of Colonel Fajardo.

Even though he were alive and had been in this house of mystery, this house that whispered of a carefully shrouded secret, why could she expect to receive any answer to a message? Old Ramon Bazán had carried his secrecy with him.

"His ship stayed a week at Balboa," said Teresa. "Then her officers and crew must have been ashore in Panama. That is where I must go to find out anything. There is nothing for me in Cartagena."

CHAPTER XVII

TERESA, HER PILGRIMAGE

Across the Isthmus to Panama! It had been a golden road for the ancestors of Teresa Fernandez to follow to the South Sea. It seemed a propitious road for her to follow in quest of Richard Cary. Early awake next morning, she felt less unhappy. It was not so much like groping in a blind alley. Those scraps of paper that had eddied in the breeze? She found a few more of them, but they told her nothing. She accepted it as a decree, perhaps of punishment. Not knowing whether Richard Cary loved her, in fear that he had died, she must set forth on her pilgrimage.

The good Señor de Mello would think it strange of her to go as unceremoniously as she had come. Anxiety for her uncle's safety, the desire to persuade him to quit his senseless wanderings, the fact that he was in the company of such an unsavory mariner as Captain Bradley Duff — this would have to serve as her pretext. What other people thought of her was, after all, of no consequence.

In the harbor she had noticed an English steamer waiting for a berth at the wharf. It was the coastwise boat that picked up cargo and passengers here and there, and went on to Colon. Teresa was out of the house before the offices and shops were open. Over her rolls and coffee in an untidy little café, she scanned a newspaper for the shipping items. The English boat was expected to sail some time during the afternoon. It seemed best to go on board as soon as possible. After some delay she found the agent and secured a stateroom.

Then she went to the bank. Señor de Mello was just arriving with his green umbrella. In his private office she explained her sudden decision as well as she could, and showed him a letter of credit. She wished to draw some money, a considerable amount for a woman to carry with her. Some emergency might arise before she could present herself at another bank.

Alonzo de Mello stared at the letter of credit. It was for two thousand dollars, many times as much as the niece of Ramon Bazán had required when intending to visit him in Cartagena. It was, in fact, every dollar of Teresa's savings, her precious anchor to windward. The banker looked up to say, in his bland, paternal manner:

"I am not one to pry, Teresa, but there is something in this that I fail to understand. Why this large letter of credit? Did you expect to travel farther than Cartagena? For transferring your funds a draft would have been proper. Ramon's wretched voyage frets you, but you anticipated nothing like this. We are very fond of you, as you know, and —"

"Then you will have to trust in me, dear Señor de Mello," pleaded Teresa. "You have known me all your life. I have tried to do what seemed right."

"No question of that," he assured her. "You will write me from Panama? And permit me to give you a letter to my agent commending you as though you were my own daughter."

Teresa's eyes filled with tears. She had little more to say. When she walked out of the bank she was still feeling the stress of emotion. A dapper young man in the uniform of a lieutenant of police stepped up to accost her. Apparently he had been waiting at the entrance. She trembled. Her lips parted. She was falling, falling into some black abyss.

Her courage lifted her out of it. She did not faint. What was the lieutenant saying?

"To meet the Señorita Fernandez makes the day radiant. May I have a few words with you? It is a matter that has been waiting some time."

"As you will," she murmured, forcing a smile. "It tires me to stand. Shall we sit in the reception room of the bank? At this early hour it is seldom in use."

The lieutenant bowed. He was a gallant fellow with an eye for a pretty woman. He sympathized with the señorita. She was, indeed, feeling indisposed. A glance at the closed door behind which Señor de Mello sat at his desk, and Teresa inquired:

"Your errand is what?"

"It is that eccentric old uncle of yours," answered the lieutenant of police.

"*Ah*, and what of him?" said Teresa. The hand of fear released its strangling clutch.

As through a mist she gazed at the lieutenant, who replied: "I take the liberty of informing you, as his niece, señorita. It may be of interest now that you have found him gone. I had the felicity of seeing you drive to his house yesterday."

"And you wish to tell me something about his voyage?"

"Yes. On the night he embarked in that wretched steamer of his, I was leaving a party of friends. It was quite late. A carriage came tearing along like the devil. Too fast, I thought. So I stepped out and halted it. Your uncle sat beside that Indian boy of his who was driving. The carriage was filled to the top with bags and valises and blankets. A reproof was all I intended. And it seemed worth looking into, this driving so fast late at night. I recognized your uncle and was about to say something

pleasant, but he seemed immensely startled. He nearly tumbled from the seat, like a man stricken with illness. The boy caught hold of him and they went on through the gate. His steamer sailed the next morning, so I suppose it was nothing serious. His health interests you, I have no doubt, Señorita Fernandez. I said to myself that old Ramon Bazán should have stayed in his comfortable house if he was as feeble as that. Have you heard from him?"

"Not yet," replied Teresa. "It is wonderfully kind of you. What else could be expected of an officer so polite and attractive? Yes, my uncle must have been ill. It was his heart. He is taken like that when excited or frightened."

"He has my prayers," exclaimed the lieutenant. "It must be lonely for you. I am at your feet. Any service in the world —"

He bowed himself out, having made an impression, so he flattered himself. It had been a clever excuse to win the favor of a girl who had inspired his passionate ardor. Teresa lingered in the reception room of the bank trying to read the riddle of a doddering uncle who had been driving at furious speed to board his ship late in the night. Why had he almost died with one of his heart attacks when an affable lieutenant of police had merely halted the carriage to question the driver? Uncle Ramon must have been mortally afraid of being detected in some secretive stratagem.

"That lieutenant is a handsome doll with a wooden head!" mused Teresa. "Why didn't he poke inside the carriage? He might have found something under all that baggage. My trip to Panama looks wiser than ever. I shall never rest until I find out why my uncle was almost scared to death."

Haste was not urgent, so Teresa walked several blocks

at a leisurely gait in search of a carriage. She stopped to look into the dusty window of a pawnshop. It occurred to her that her pilgrimage might lead her into unpleasant places. In the sailors' haunts of tropical ports a woman ran certain risks. She could not think of carrying another little automatic pistol in her pocket. The very sight of one in the pawnshop window made her shudder.

Idly standing there, she caught sight of another weapon that strongly attracted her fancy. It was an antique dagger, resembling the *miséricorde* of the age of chivalry, such as knights in armor had worn attached to the belt by a chain. On the tarnished handle of this relic a crest was still discernible. The blade had rusted thin, but the double edge could easily be ground sharp. It was a small weapon, only a few inches long, contrived for a thrust between the joints of a corselet or neck-piece at close quarters.

In the rubbish of a pawnshop in a side street, this dagger had escaped the search of collectors. It had come from some ancient house of Cartagena, a weapon that might have clinked on the steel-clad thigh of a *conquistador*. Teresa bought it for a *peso*. The pawnbroker rummaged until he found a sheath of embossed leather into which the dagger could be slipped. A ribbon could be sewn to the sheath, a ribbon long enough to pass around the neck. Then the dagger could be worn inside a woman's dress. *Miséricorde!* The sad heart of Teresa and a dagger next it!

Returning to the house, she decided to leave her new clothes there. This cost her a pang, but it might be a rough road and a long one. A battered little sole-leather trunk, unearthed in Uncle Ramon's storeroom, would serve her needs. In her handbag was Richard Cary's briar pipe.

Two days after this, a trim young woman, very simply dressed in white, found shelter in an old stone hotel near

the plaza of Panama. Her fastidious taste would have preferred the large American hotel on the Ancon hill in the Canal Zone, but this was too far removed from the cross-roads of merchant mariners in drudging cargo boats. She was familiar with the noisy streets of Panama through which flowed a mixture of races from all the Seven Seas.

The afternoon was growing late when Teresa began her quest. It led her first to the bank in which Señor de Mello's agent had his office. He was a native of the city and in close touch with west coast shipping. To Teresa's dismay he informed her that Ramon Bazán's steamer *Valkyrie* had not been heard from since leaving the Balboa docks. It had not arrived at Buenaventura, only three hundred miles down the coast. The weather had been unusually fair, with no heavy winds. Already a week had elapsed.

The steamer carried no wireless, but had she been disabled some other vessel would have reported her by this time. They were coming in every day. In such good weather and near the coast, the *Valkyrie* could not have foundered without trace. Her boats would have taken care of the crew. Furthermore, cable messages of inquiry, sent at the request of Señor Alonzo de Mello, disclosed that no steamer by this name was expected at Buenaventura. The shipping firms and export agents in that port had made no charter arrangements nor had there been any correspondence about cargo. Steamers of the regular services were taking care of all the freight offered at this season of the year.

"Then my old uncle never sailed for Buenaventura? And he had no intention of going there?" commented Teresa.

"He must have changed his plans," suavely observed the agent.

"He is very capricious, señor. Did you happen to meet him while his ship was coaling at Balboa?"

"Yes, Señorita Fernandez. He came into the office to draw funds to pay the Canal tolls, having arranged a credit for that purpose. He had little to say and seemed quite feeble."

"He would seem that way, at parting from so much money. Did he bring his captain with him?"

"No. I don't know who commanded the steamer. I am extremely sorry, but I have to take a train to Colon late this afternoon to be gone until to-morrow. After that, I shall be delighted to go with you to Balboa. The records will tell you who the captain was, and there may be other details. I am acquainted with the officials and it will expedite your affairs. A young lady may feel a certain awkwardness —"

Teresa was cordially grateful. The situation had taken on aspects more complex and inexplicable than ever. As a seafarer herself, she accepted the theory that the *Valkyrie* had met with no disaster while bound down the coast to Buenaventura. The vessel had steered some unknown course of her own to another destination. From the beginning her tortuous uncle had schemed and lied to mask his real purpose, whatever that might be. No mere hallucination could have lured him into the Pacific. It had not occurred to him that any one might try to follow him.

At Balboa, Teresa might be able to discover whether Richard Cary had been in the ship. This was of transcendent moment to her. But even were it true, her penitential pilgrimage was no more than begun. It was necessary to meet him face to face. Her own soul was at stake. What had happened to Ricardo that night in Cartagena, when he

had been missing from his ship? What of the guilt of the dead Colonel Fajardo?

Teresa walked the floor of her room in the Panama hotel. What she said to herself was like this:

"Supposing Ricardo is commanding this Flying Dutchman of a ship. Where has he gone? No records in the Canal office can tell me that. A wonderful comfort, if it is the will of God to let me know Ricardo is alive and strong. But what of me? Ah, what of poor me? There must be some way of finding out, here in Panama, but how can I go into the places where this Bradley Duff and the sailors may have babbled with the liquor in them? Do I look like one of the wretched girls in these dirty cabarets?

"It is hard to keep a secret in a ship after she has left her own port. Something seems to whisper it — a look, a word, a feeling. Perhaps my Uncle Ramon muttered in his sleep, as he often does at home. He is too old to play such a hand as this for very long. Look what it did to him when he was frightened by that lieutenant of police! And if he loses his temper he may say too much. If those Colombian sailors got it into their heads that the voyage was to be longer than to Buenaventura, it would be like some of them to desert such an unseaworthy vessel in Panama. One thing I do know. I can never sit here and wait with folded hands for the *Valkyrie* to come back to the Canal. It might be weeks and months or not at all."

To be a roving woman where sailors resorted in this and perhaps other ports of the Spanish Main was both hampering and repugnant. It made a difficult task unendurable. Unwelcome attentions, insults, nameless perils might be her lot. Not that Teresa flinched or hesitated, but it was possible to make the path easier. The most hopeful clue was Captain Bradley Duff. He was almost certain to have

had disreputable friends in Panama. Birds of his feather flocked together, and they were always thirsty. Likely enough there had been money in his pocket to make him popular. He would be the boisterous good fellow, greedily sociable, anxious to parade the fact that he was no longer on the beach. And what he knew he would be apt to confide to this companion and that.

Yes, it was a handicap to be a good woman, reflected Teresa, and she did not propose to be a bad one. There was another way. It appealed to her as feasible. Some daring would be required to carry it off, but she was not one to lack faith in herself. At the masquerade ball in Cartagena, two years ago, she had played the part of a *caballero* so well that the girls had boldly flirted with her. Her hair had been hidden by a huge sombrero adorned with silver braid.

Her hair was her crown and her glory. If she decided to play the part in Panama, it would have to be sacrificed. But what mattered a woman's vanity now, or her desire to be thought beautiful, if she had lost her lover and knew not where to find him?

Teresa went shopping in Panama. It was rather amusing. A boy trudged behind her with a large, shiny new suitcase in which the various purchases were stowed. He followed her to a side-entrance of the hotel and so to her room.

Having dismissed him and locked the door, Teresa sat and looked at herself in the glass. *Adios* to the girl who had been so proud of Ricardo's admiration! She let down her black hair. It flowed over her lovely shoulders. Snip, snip, the wicked new shears severed the tresses. Her hand was unsteady. It was a dreadful thing to do. Even the sight of bobbed hair made her feel like swearing. This was much worse.

A ragged job it was when she gloomily surveyed the result. Carefully, tenderly, she gathered up her tresses and wrapped them in a silk scarf. She could not bear to throw them away. Presently she was slipping a belt through the loops of linen trousers. She scowled at the canvas shoes. The clumsy pattern disguised a narrow foot and an arching instep. The soft white shirt with a rolling collar was open at the throat. A loose coat of gray Palm Beach cloth completed the costume. The brim of her own Panama hat was bent down in front with a touch of jauntiness.

Teresa surveyed herself with a critical scrutiny. Her girlish bust and slender hips were unobtrusive. What she saw in the glass was a supple youth as straight as a lance, a youth with an oval face and dark eyes too somber for his years. At a glance he resembled a hundred others who strolled in the plazas or sat at the café tables of any Spanish-American city. His name was Rubio Sanchez, so he was informed, as the farewell message of Señorita Teresa Fernandez before she made her exit from the stage.

The young Colombian, Rubio Sanchez, busied himself in the room a little while longer. Then he sauntered down to the lobby in which men loafed and smoked and talked of many things. It was near the dinner hour. Behind the desk the night clerk was on duty. He had been denied the pleasure of welcoming Señorita Fernandez in the afternoon. The slim, debonair youth from Cartagena sauntered over to say to him in a voice of a pleasant contralto quality:

"The lady, my sister, wishes to leave her trunk in storage. I will pay her bill. Here is the key. Have your porter bring down the suitcase. I will look after it for her. She has been sent for in haste. An uncle old and sick needs her."

The clerk was an obliging person. He expressed his

regrets and arranged matters promptly. Young Rubio Sanchez and his large, shiny suitcase presently departed in a one-horse hack which was instructed to proceed until told to stop. The passenger sat indolently, a cigarette between his lips.

What made him alert was the blazing electric sign of "The Broadway Front" which seemed to be a pretentious lodging-house with a saloon, restaurant, and dance-hall on the ground front. It was the most flamboyant place of good-cheer along the street. It loomed like a beacon to draw the wandering footsteps of sailormen weary of the sea. Captain Bradley Duff and his shipmates of the *Valkyrie* never could have passed it by.

Rubio Sanchez, a blasé young man who knew his way about, halted the hack and swung his shiny suitcase to the pavement. Here were rooms to rent. The building was new. It looked neither dingy nor dirty. It would do for the night, or until fortune beckoned elsewhere.

He spied a barber shop next door. It occurred to him as advisable to finish what the shears had so awkwardly begun. The barber eyed him critically, with a smirk of amusement. Never had he beheld such a ragged hair-cut. Rubio Sanchez curtly told him to make it smooth, leaving enough to part. The barber laughed and asked in Spanish:

"Was it chewed by the mice, señor? You had been letting it grow very long."

"Not as long as your clacking tongue," was the crisp retort. "Shall I cut it for you?"

The barber goggled at the slender youth in the chair, but held his peace. It was not good to jest too far with one whose voice was so cool and hard.

CHAPTER XVIII

RUBIO SANCHEZ FINDS FRIENDS

In the American bar of The Broadway Front, the mahogany counter ran the length of the room. Mirrors glittered behind it. Here was a shrine of Bacchus, extinct in its native land, in which the rites of the ritual were faithfully observed. The presiding genius was a florid Irish bar-tender in a crisp white jacket with a flower in the lapel. Assisting him were three acolytes native to Panama. For them the lowly service of pulling the shining handles of the beer-pumps, cracking ice and washing glasses. With the skill of an artist and the speed of a prestidigitator, their master hurled cocktails, fizzes, and punches together and served them to the votaries who rested one foot upon the brass rail in the traditional posture of those about to offer libations.

Women were excluded from this room. Across the hallway was the café, the dancing-floor, the stage where entertainment more frivolous was provided. The mahogany bar and the little tables were sacred to the wit and wisdom of the sterner sex, to the discussion of weighty matters to which Mike, the paragon of bar-tenders, would always lend a sympathetic ear. He was a friend and philosopher of a vintage much riper and rarer than the stuff he sold.

Alone at one of the tables sat a pensive young man of delicate features whose black hair was smoothly parted. At this moment he was reminding himself that his name was Rubio Sanchez. He sipped a claret lemonade through a straw and eyed the passing show with a trepidation not easily dissembled.

The bar was crowded — American soldiers from the Canal Zone garrisons hilariously rolling the dice for the drinks, tanned bluejackets from ships of the Pacific Fleet, dapper Panama merchants, brisk Yankee salesmen spreading the gospel of safety razors, sewing machines, and porous underwear from Mexico to Peru, solid master mariners and mates who held aloof from the rabble of landsmen.

The solitary young man, Rubio Sanchez, was unmolested. No one even noticed him. The sense of panicky uneasiness diminished. He perceived that it was urgently advisable for him to make the acquaintance of Mike, the suave and genial divinity behind the bar. He was the very man to have stowed away the garrulous gossip and confidences that were forever dinned at him. The place was repellent to young Rubio Sanchez, but not as shocking as had been feared.

Disorder was smothered before it started. A lifted hand, a word of reproof from Mike, or a threat to summon the boss, and quarrelsome topers subsided. This threat of summoning the boss seemed to be most effective. Unseen, he exercised a potent influence.

There would be no opportunity to engage the attention of the persuasive bar-tender until the crowd had thinned. Rubio Sanchez lingered and looked on with the curious feeling that a kindly star had guided the pilgrimage to this Broadway Front. It was like a comforting intuition.

In the company that swirled along the bar was a boyish bluejacket, clean-built, jolly, with the red bars of a petty officer on his sleeve. He looked winsome and unspoiled, but eager to see what life was like. His two companions were older and harder Navy men. It was his money that carelessly paid for the rounds of drinks. He displayed crumpled

bills by the fistful. It was like so much trash that burned holes in his pockets.

An argument arose. His companions had another engagement for the evening. They conferred with their heads together. The youngster laughed and refused to be dragged along. He was heard to call them a pair of boobs. The Navy patrol would be sure to pinch them if they rambled into the red-light district and, anyhow, they ought to know better. None of that for him. They borrowed money of him and rolled out to charter a seagoing hack.

The youngster stood undecided what to do next. It was early for the music and dancing in the cabaret across the hall. He drifted over to a table, sprawled in a chair, and glanced around the room. Two or three penniless loafers would have joined him, but he curtly told them to beat it. The young South American sitting alone with a lemonade and a straw impressed him favorably. He sauntered over, the round Navy hat balanced on the back of his head, and affably remarked:

"Hello, kid! How's tricks? Don't you go drowning yourself in too many buckets of that pink lemonade. What you need is one of Mike's vermouth stingarees. I'll buy."

"Too much sting in it for me," said the black-haired Rubio Sanchez, with a shy smile. "A little claret and vichy this time, if you don't mind."

"Suit yourself, buddy. I'm no souse myself. What's your game? I don't see anybody to play with but that bunch of doughboys with their bellies against the bar. God may love the Army, but I pass. What's your home port? You were born under a cocoanut tree somewheres."

"Colombia, but you can't lose me in New York," replied Rubio. "I used to sail there."

"You don't look husky enough. What's your ship?"

"A cargo boat in the Pacific trade, but she left me on the beach."

It went against the grain to deceive this warm-hearted, attractive Navy lad. In fact, there was no reason why he should be kept in the dark concerning the vanished *Valkyrie*. He had won the respect of Teresa Fernandez by his refusal to go roistering among the bad women of Panama.

"Gee, you are out of luck," impulsively exclaimed the boyish petty officer. "What's your name? Rubio? Hey, Rube, if you need any coin, I've got a bundle. You're a good kid. I can size 'em up. Steve Brackett, gunner's mate, second class, is what they call me. I'm in the destroyer *Patterson*. We've been chasing a division of seaplanes that made a flight down from San Diego."

"You ought not to carry so much money," seriously advised young Rubio. "Panama is just looking for fellows like you. I have money enough, thank you with all my heart."

"Let 'em try to ease me of my roll," bragged the gunner's mate. "I'm not such a soft mark for these spiggoty crooks. On the level, kid, I ought to convoy *you*. For a sailor you sure do look timid and tender."

"Is that so? Here, let me take your hand," smiled the soft-spoken young Colombian.

Steve Brackett extended a brown, calloused paw. Before he could close it, the fingers were squeezed in a quick, nervous grip that made him wince and cry out. He wrenched them free and exclaimed:

"Easy, kid! Do you want to cripple one of the best gunpointers in this man's Navy? Huh, you *are* the deceivin' guy! How do you get that way, with a wrist as small as that, and a hand like a girl's?"

The training of a ship's stewardess might have had something to do with it, but Rubio fancifully explained:

"There were some great swordsmen in my family one time. Listen, Steve, do you know this nice, polite bartender? Tell me about him."

"Who, Mike? They don't grow 'em any better. Sure I know him. I was here in a cruiser for the Fleet maneuvers last winter. The Navy swears by Mike. Stick around and you'll hear him bawl me out if I'm liable to overstay my liberty to-night and get in trouble. He's a regular daddy to us young gobs."

Just then the musicians in the café across the hall began to bang and blare and tootle in a barbaric frenzy of syncopated discords. The voluble patrons of the bar deserted it almost to a man. Mike was given a respite to put the shrine of Bacchus in order and to rest his weary frame. Having instructed his assistants, he donned a fresh jacket and apron, and found a chair and a newspaper at a little table near the bar.

"Come on, Rube, if you want to chew the rag with him," said the gunner's mate. "Now's the time. This cease-firing interval won't last long. Some of those rum-hounds will be romping in as soon as they dance 'emselves dusty."

Rubio Sanchez complied with a fluttering timidity. This smooth, sophisticated bar-tender had an eye like a hawk. For him the proper study of mankind was man. He removed the glasses from his fleshy nose, puckered his brows, and heartily exclaimed:

"Glad you shook them hard-boiled pals, Steve. They ain't your class. An', mind, you drink no more hard stuff to-night, understand?"

"All done, Mike. Meet my friend Señor Rube Sanchez, a sailorman like myself."

"Howdy, señor. Set down, boys. What's on your chests? I'm flattered to have you prefer me company to the wild women in the cabaret yonder."

Rubio's clear voice trembled, but it held its contralto pitch as he said:

"I have an errand of much importance to me, Mr. Mike. I want to find a steamer that belongs to my uncle, Señor Ramon Bazán of Cartagena. He is an old man as wrinkled as a monkey. He sailed in this vessel, which is a little tramp named the *Valkyrie* and flies the flag of Colombia. She was at Balboa not long ago, bound to Buenaventura, but she didn't go there at all."

The benevolent Mr. Mike was interested. He laid down the newspaper and assumed his habitual manner of patient and tactful deference.

"Well, well," said he, "'tis comical to have a steamer go playin' hookey with itself, ain't it, Señor Sanchez? And you've tried the other coast ports, north and south of here?"

"Yes. The vessel is nowhere on the coast, Mr. Mike."

"So you're adrift and forlorn without this uncle that looks like a monkey? The *Valkyrie*, hey? Who else was in her?"

"Captain Bradley Duff, for one," replied Rubio. "He is pretty well known."

"Bradley Duff? The lousy old skate!" said Mike, with an air of reflection. "He was in jail in Panama a year ago, an' I paid his fine for him. The spiggoty cops run him in for disturbin' the peace. A first-class skipper was Bradley Duff till he piled a fine steamer up when he was stewed, an' that busted him."

"My uncle was crazy when he hired him," said Rubio, "but in Cartagena he could find nobody else."

"I dunno about that," observed Mike. "A man may be down, but he's never out. But I'd never apply this motto to Bradley Duff if I hadn't seen it with me own two eyes. Your old uncle made no mistake, surprising as it may sound. Not long ago, do you say? Right you are, Señor Sanchez. In walks this same Bradley Duff, an' you could ha' knocked me down with a lemonade straw. He was clean and smart as new paint. Blue serge coat buttoned over that fat stummick of his, a chief officer's stripes on the sleeves, white duck pants, cap cocked over one eye an' you be billy-be-damned! He slaps his money on the bar an' drinks a bottle of beer."

"Was he alone?" asked Rubio, leaning forward.

"In solitary grandeur he was, an' minding his own business. Strong men used to flee when he came into a barroom, for it was him that could talk your ear off, boomin' an' droolin' along by the hour. Well, we passed the time of day, an' I handed him a few compliments an' another bottle of beer on the house. All he told me was that his ship was the *Valkyrie* an' he was chief officer. Never a word about where he was going nor what for. Something is in the wind, I says to meself, but I'm not slick enough to pry it out of this human clam of a Bradley Duff.

"He sets down for a spell, very dignified, buyin' no more drinks, as indifferent as if him an' booze had never been introjuced. Then he looks at the clock, says he's due back on board an' pounds out. 'Twas like one of these juicy young gobs on liberty. The discipline of the ship was not to be trifled with. Something powerful had put the fear of God into Bradley Duff. As the Good Book says, whilst the light holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may come home to roost."

The young Colombian had hearkened to this harangue

with strained attention. His slim fingers were playing a tattoo on the table. Forlorn and adrift he was, indeed. The cup of hope had been dashed from his lips. Again he was groping. He brushed a hand over his short, black hair so smoothly parted. The gesture was a tragic symbol. The sacrifice had been to no purpose.

"Did you ask him who was captain, Mr. Mike?" faltered Rubio. "Did any other officers come in?"

"Nary a one. And from what he said, the crew was held pretty close. I might have asked him more questions, but I was busy at the time. Somebody had shut him up tight. He heard his master's voice, did Bradley Duff."

"And you — you didn't see a very big, splendid young man with bright yellow hair — a man you could never forget, Mr. Mike? He may have been the captain of the *Valkyrie*. A wonderful-looking man — there is nobody like him on this coast."

"You lose, son," said the sympathetic Mr. Mike. His expression betokened surprise. "To the best of me knowledge, there has been no young man like that hereabouts. It is him you're after, an' not the old monkey of an uncle?"

"He was very kind to me in a ship, Mr. Mike, when he was the second mate. I — I wish I could see him again."

The profound wisdom of the veteran bar-tender prompted him to study the slender, drooping youth whose emotion was so unexpected. The boyish gunner's mate had been keeping silent with the courtesy of a lad who had been taught to listen to his elders. Now, however, he eagerly exclaimed:

"All right, kid. I didn't want to butt in. Now you pipe down and give me the deck. It seems to mean a whole lot to you to find that ship and the big guy that makes you cry. I've got some dope for you. The *Valkyrie!* Is that the

hooker? A bum little tramp with red sides and a rusty funnel, that somebody resurrected from the bone-yard? Moseyin' along in ballast, is she? Listen! My destroyer was coming south a few days ago, see, and we fetched a course away from the coast of Costa Rica to search for a seaplane that had engine trouble and was reported as blown offshore. We sighted a steamer steering almost due west. Our skipper thought perhaps she might have sighted the seaplane, so we tried her with radio and got no answer. We ran down to speak her. It was unusual to see a vessel as small as this tramp heading so far to the west'ard instead of following the coast. The Pacific Ocean looked awful large and wet for her to cross.

"The signal quartermaster tried her with a flag hoist in the international code. All he got back was a string of ragged bunting that looked as if the rats had chewed it. You couldn't make out the code letters to save your soul. So we kept on to run close and hail her with a megaphone. Say, kid, the skipper of this *Valkyrie* was one whale of a big guy! He waved his straw hat, and he sure was a natural blond. Lazy and good-natured, too, like he was enjoying a life on the ocean wave. That's how he looked when he grinned at us. The world was his buddy.

"He hollered over that he hadn't seen any stray seaplanes, and would we please give him the correct Greenwich time because his owner had bought the chronometer in a junk-shop to save a dollar. We asked him where he thought he was going, but he laughed and said he was going to Davy Jones's locker if the weather went back on him. It was nothing in our young lives, so we hauled on our course and wished him luck. Now, kid, I've found the big guy for you, but where he expects to head in is too much for me. What's your guess?"

The kid from Cartagena was guilty of the most unmanly behavior. He was biting his lip and dabbing his eyes with a handkerchief. He could not speak. Steve Brackett, the gunner's mate with the heart of a gentleman and the manners of a prince, looked inquiringly at Mike, but said not another word. The bar-tender nodded in the direction of the door. Steve took the hint. A hand on Rubio's soft shoulder, he said:

"So-long, kid! I've got to shove off. Glad I could do you a good turn. Look me up if you get a chance, or drop a line care U.S.S. *Patterson*. Tell Mike your troubles and don't hold out on him. That goes double for the boss of this dump. If the kid needs more than you can do for him, Mike, be sure to steer him against the boss, won't you?"

"Sure, Steve. The kid could ha' done worse than camp in the bar-room of The Broadway Front."

The gunner's mate hung his round white hat on three hairs and delayed to roll a cigarette. Meditatively he scratched a match. Rubio's hand stole into his, in a clasp strong and grateful. Steve blushed a fiery red and jerked his hand away. Then he moved briskly to the door without glancing behind him.

Mike sat with his elbows on the table and regarded young Rubio Sanchez, not with the eye of a hawk, but with a scrutiny both pitiful and protective. The lad might have got away with it, he said to himself, if it hadn't been for the big guy with the yellow hair. Even now there was more suspicion than proof. Taking Rubio by the arm, he spoke in confidential tones.

"Where are you staying at, son? The Tivoli? No? Right here? Don't try to talk. You won't be wanting to go through the crowded hall to get upstairs, till you sort of pull yourself together. I'll have to be tending bar again.

Here's what you do. Go into the boss's office an' wait for him. The door in the corner yonder. No one'll bother you. He 'phoned from his house that the wife had a headache an' he would set with her an hour or so. This place may seem rough to you, but betwixt Mike an' the boss you're agoin' to be looked after right."

Alone in the private office, Teresa Fernandez heard Mike turn the key in the lock. She was not so much frightened as chagrined that she had miserably failed to play the rôle. But how could she help breaking down for joy and thanksgiving that she had been granted a blessed vision of Ricardo, alive, untouched by fate, towering on the bridge of a ship? God had guarded him. She also would be guarded. Her faith glowed like an illumined altar, and she felt safe even in a situation like this.

For a few minutes she stood looking out of a barred, open window into a dark rear yard enclosed by a high wall. The room was small and plainly furnished, a rolltop desk, two chairs, and a massive steel safe. One of the chairs was against the wall, at one side of the open window. She sank into it and was soothed by the hum of the electric fan. She wondered what the boss could be like, and why he commanded the implicit respect of Mike and the fine young gunner's mate. How could he help her find a vanished ship? This was all that mattered.

The doorknob turned. She jumped to her feet, again the young man Rubio Sanchez, alert and on the defensive. A burly man of middle age entered the office. First impressions were alarming. He looked brutal and overbearing, a man fitted to dominate this Broadway Front. He had a jaw like a rock and the neck of a bull. The deep-set eyes were as hard as agates. Teresa watched his mouth. It was human, with a whimsical twist as he spoke from a corner of it.

"Sit down, Señor Sanchez, and make yourself at home. Have a cigar? No? I am Jerry Tobin and I won't bite you. So let's be sociable. Mike told me what he could, about your hunt for the *Valkyrie* and so on. You banked on picking up some news in Panama, didn't you? And that goose is cooked?"

"I did find some wonderful news, but it wasn't enough, Mr. Tobin," replied Rubio, his voice steadied, his demeanor composed.

"I'm here to do what I can for you," was the gruff response, "but I don't recommend your living in the Broadway Front. That's too much to have on my mind."

"I was in a hotel, before the goose was cooked, Mr. Tobin. I — er — I don't want to go back there, but I can go somewhere else."

"We can fix that up later," said Jerry Tobin, peeling off his coat and shoving back the top of the desk. "I can think better with a pencil and paper. This destroyer kid met your ship off the coast of Costa Rica, Mike tells me. And the voyage was a secret? Going to Buenaventura was all a bluff?"

"My old uncle bluffs in his sleep," laughed Rubio. "He whispers to himself through a keyhole. But he was never so head over heels in a secret as this time."

"It makes 'em act that way," barked Jerry Tobin, making marks with the pencil. "If you hadn't sort of knocked Mike off his pins by blubbering in the bar-room, perhaps he would have put you wise. Wait a minute and I'll draw you a rough map. Panama Bay to the coast of Costa Rica and then due west! I'll put down a dot for an island that has made all kinds of people as dippy as your uncle. An old pirate's chart and some shovels and dynamite —"

Jerry Tobin broke off abruptly. A turbulent life he must

have led, but now he was staring at the open window like a man whose wits were frozen. His seamed, forbidding visage reflected terror, hatred, helplessness. The hard eyes were unwinking.

Teresa Fernandez gazed at him in fixed fascination. She moved not so much as a finger. She heard a voice at the open window, a wicked voice that cut the stillness like a knife.

"Hands up, Jerry, you —— —— I've got you cold. Now back yourself over to the safe. Turn around and open her up. Come clean, or I'll plug you in the back. The whole bank roll! Make it snappy!"

Burly John Tobin may have had some reason to recall that sinister voice. Very cautiously he backed away from the desk with hands rigidly upraised until his heel struck the safe. Then he knelt to fumble with the combination knob. He was working as fast as he could. His face was gray. Sweat bedewed it.

Almost without breathing, Teresa Fernandez watched him. She dared not turn her head toward the window. She was unseen by the man outside. He had spied only Jerry Tobin in the room. From where he stood in the yard, the girl in the chair against the wall was invisible. It was a blunder.

From a corner of her eye, Teresa could perceive the window ledge. The criminal was careful to stand a little way back from it, where he could dodge for cover if the door should suddenly open. To steady himself, he rested a hand upon the window ledge. Teresa could see this hand from where she sat. She could have reached out and touched it. It was a hairy hand with thick fingers and broken nails, a detestable hand. Teresa looked at it, flattening herself in the chair. Then she looked at the kneel-

ing figure of Jerry Tobin who was removing a small drawer from the open safe.

This man who had befriended her was unable to defend himself. There had been a worse menace than robbery in that sinister voice from outside the window. It signified some old score to settle, a vengeance to be slaked. It was as wicked as a snake.

Jerry Tobin straightened himself and stood with the drawer in his hand. His movements were as stiff and careful as those of a man with lumbago. The drawer was filled with packages of bank-notes. His eyes roved to the roll-top desk, but he could not reach the pistol in it. The voice outside the window spoke again.

"Come through, Jerry, you dirty dog. No funny business. You ain't got coin enough to square it this side of hell. I'm liable to blow your head off yet."

It was the voice of a man lustful to kill, but not quite ready to risk the consequences. Jerry Tobin's life hung in the balance. The weight of a feather might swing it either way. Teresa Fernandez could read in his drawn, ashen face that he expected no mercy. It was the climax of a mortal feud.

Teresa put her hand to her breast. Her fingers felt the handle of the antique dagger under the soft shirt, the two-edged weapon in the leather sheath hung by a ribbon around her neck. No matter what Jerry Tobin might have done to deserve a bullet, he was a friend, and she was loyal. She stole a glance at the hairy hand upon the window ledge.

Her own hand flew inside her shirt and whipped out the dagger. A jaguar could have struck with no more speed and fury. The blade drove down through the detestable hand upon the window ledge and quivered in the soft wood.

It was driven by a supple wrist and an explosion of energy. It transfixed the evil hand and spiked it there.

Jerry Tobin leaped for the desk and snatched a pistol from a pigeon-hole. From a corner of his mouth he growled like a mastiff:

"Guess again, you dumb-bell. Drop that gun."

The dumb-bell had forgotten that he possessed a gun. He was writhing and cursing, his one idea being to pull that dagger out of the window ledge. Jerry Tobin preferred to let it stay there for the moment. Mildly he said to the girl in the chair:

"On your way, señorita. You mustn't get mixed up in this. Go upstairs and wait there for me. Stay in your room. Tell Mike to come here. Excuse me, but you'd better pull your shirt together. Rubio Sanchez is a dead card."

Teresa clutched at the bosom of her shirt. A button had been ripped off. It revealed no more than did her evening gown of black lace, but it was enough to prove to Jerry Tobin that he had taken on the responsibilities of a chaperon. The color dyed her face from chin to brow as she buttoned the gray coat over the shirt.

Looking neither at the window ledge nor at Jerry Tobin, she fled from the office, whispered a hurried word to Mr. Mike as she passed the bar, and stole into the hall and up the staircase. The straw hat was pulled low over her eyes. Safely in her room, she shot the bolt and fairly toppled over on the bed. To her ears came the thump, thump of the drums, the frenzied wail of the saxophones, loud laughter, snatches of song.

An hour passed before she was aroused by a knock on the door. It was Jerry Tobin. He entered rather gingerly, as if to apologize for an intrusion. As a chaperon he was

evidently a novice. His change of manner was amusing. He was like a man afraid. From a pocket he took the antique dagger. The blade had been cleaned of stains. Awkwardly he ventured to say:

"Here's something of yours. I didn't want the police to find it. Sheeny George, the bird you — ahem — left it with, don't know how it happened."

"What did you say to the police?" fearfully asked Teresa.

"No more than I had to. I made 'em a present of an outlaw with a record as long as your arm, and they were tickled to death. He'll get put away for pretty near the rest of his life. So there's that. You don't show in it at all."

"But I don't want the dagger, Mr. Tobin. Throw it away."

"Not if you'll let me keep it as a souvenir. You won't have to pack any more weapons. Understand? So cheer up, young lady. You've got a friend to make the play for you. Do you mind telling me what name to call you by?"

"Teresa Fernandez. As a young man I was — I was a failure, Mr. Tobin."

"Oh, not so worse, until you just naturally blew up," was his verdict. "Now, Miss Fernandez, I can't make your head of black hair grow again, but they're wearing it short. Against that, you can credit yourself with a large, elegant's night's work. You saved my bank-roll, twenty thousand dollars. I run a game on the third floor. And you just about saved my wife from being a widow. Sheeny George was working up steam to croak me. It was the yellow streak that held him back just long enough for you to get action."

"His voice told me so," shakily replied Teresa. "Oh, Mr. Jerry Tobin, I am going all to pieces. What can I do?

You don't know — you don't know — I did it to help you — I was so angry — but I never, never want to see a pistol or a knife again, not in all my life. I used to be a happy girl and I never harmed anybody — and I never dreamed of things like this —"

This was too much for battling Jerry Tobin to handle. As he said to himself, it was time to pass the buck. Fingering that iron jaw of his, he issued his instructions.

"Please scramble your stuff into that suitcase, Miss Fernandez, or let me do it for you, seeing as it's the duds of the late Rubio Sanchez. You are going home with me. This is a job for Mrs. Jerry Tobin, a woman that's too good for this world. The best bet for you is a mother. Savvey that? Have you got any other clothes?"

"A trunk at the Hotel Las Palmas," meekly answered Teresa. "What will Mrs. Tobin say? My goodness, I am scared again."

"You scare easy, don't you?" he grunted. "I know different. I 'phoned the missus, but I didn't tell her too much. I never do. You and she will cuddle up like two kittens in a basket. My car is outside. Now let's make it *pronto*."

Teresa obeyed. Discussion seemed absurd. The boss had proclaimed an edict. She had one question to ask.

"That island, Mr. Tobin, where you said my uncle's ship had gone? You were going to show me with a pencil."

"Cocos Island? What's the hurry? I'll get you there. If I know anything about these treasure-hunting nuts, this locoed uncle of yours will be blasting rock and making the gravel fly from now till the Fourth of July."

"Cocos Island?" murmured Teresa. "I never heard of any treasure on Cocos Island. That was just my hard luck, Mr. Tobin, or maybe I am thick."

"Not thick, Miss Fernandez. For fast work you have

me stopped. You wouldn't be so apt to hear this treasure dope over on the Atlantic side. Leave the proposition to me. As a fixer, I'm good."

Jerry Tobin carried the shiny suitcase into the lower hall. Teresa had a farewell glimpse of the devoted Mr. Mike. He was manipulating a cocktail shaker and patiently listening to the sorrows of a stranger who clung to the bar like a limpet to a reef.

While they drove through the city and into a suburb of trim lawns and bungalows, Jerry Tobin was taciturn. Teresa felt grateful for it. For the time she had ceased to fret and suffer. Quietude enfolded her. Through troubled waters and muddy, her pilgrimage had led her to a haven. She was tolerant of the faults and follies of mankind as she had known them on land and sea. God's grace might visit the heart of a Mr. Mike or a Jerry Tobin as well as the heart of a priest. Saints or sinners, who was she to condemn, a woman who had yet to cleanse her own soul of stain?

Jerry Tobin marched her into a wide-roofed bungalow on the side of a green hill. A woman came forward to meet them. She was slight and plain-featured, insignificant to the eye. To Jerry Tobin she was the Colleen Bawn. He kissed her like a knight paying homage to a lady love. The Jerry Tobin, boss of The Broadway Front, was unknown inside this threshold.

His wife saw the slender girl who waited hesitant, uncertain of her welcome. Mary Tobin took her hands as she said:

"Jerry 'phoned me you were a lady and a darling, Miss Fernandez, and I would love to have you in the house. Once in a while the lump of a man says something real sensible. Now run away, Jerry, and leave us two women alone. You have done your bit for to-night."

CHAPTER XIX

THE INTRUDER FROM ECUADOR

THE voice of Señor Ramon Bazán cracked with excitement as he cried out, from the bridge of the *Valkyrie:*

"Behold our Cocos Island, my Ricardo! You have steered the ship as straight as an arrow."

They were gazing at a lofty, rounded hill that lifted from the sea like the cone of a dead volcano. For the most part its slopes were green, with bare cliffs here and there or yellow gullies washed by the rains. In the top of this hill was a bowl or crater which seemed to brim over with water like a tiny lake, spilling many streams that leaped and flowed to the strip of level land, close to the sea, which was luxuriant with cocoanut palms. A pleasant island to visit, as the buccaneers had found it when first their topsails had gleamed in the South Sea.

It was no longer a secret to the *Valkyrie*'s crew that they were bound in search of pirates' treasure. Captain Richard Cary had told them so, soon after the departure from Balboa. He had pledged them his word that if they played fair with him they should receive a share of the booty. They believed him. The Colombian sailors and firemen yelled with enthusiasm. They had completely forgotten the conspiracy to take the ship back to Cartagena and claim the reward offered for *El Tigre Amarillo Grande*, dead or alive. It had been a foolish dream of very stupid men, they admitted among themselves. Their huge captain had saved the wretched steamer from perishing in the storm on the Caribbean coast. After that, he had enforced such a discipline and mastery as they had never known in

their lives, the rule of a sea-lord who was both stern and kind. He held them under his thumb. It was even a pleasure to obey him for the sake of the sunny smile and the word of praise that followed duty well done.

With chart and sounding lead, the *Valkyrie* slowly approached Cocos Island to find the small bay which was indicated as an anchorage. As the bay opened to view between its rock-bound headlands, the masts of a schooner became visible. Señor Ramon Bazán was greatly disturbed. He snatched up the binocular and squinted until the hull of the schooner was disclosed.

"By my soul, it is another treasure party!" he wildly shouted. "They will find out my secret of the place where it is hidden."

"We can't very well stick up no trespass signs on Cocos Island," said Cary, in his easy fashion. "It doesn't belong to us."

Chief Officer Bradley Duff broke in to say: "No sense in borrowing trouble, Señor Bazán. Of course you were all wrapped up in your own pet scheme, but it is no great surprise to me to find another party here. They have been at it on and off, all kinds of expeditions, as long as I've known this coast. If you have the real information, then the rest of 'em are out of luck. We won't let this other outfit crowd us."

"We will make them mind their own business," grumbled Señor Bazán, in a very fretful humor. "I bought those rifles in Panama, Ricardo, to guard the treasure after we find it, but nobody must interfere with us at all. Do you understand that?"

"Wait and look it over," placidly advised Ricardo. "There seems to be plenty of elbow-room on the island. The schooner may have touched here out of curiosity."

The *Valkyrie* nosed her way inside the bay and let an anchor splash a few hundred feet from the three-masted schooner which flew no colors. Several South Americans lounged beneath an awning. They looked like seamen left in charge while the rest of the company went ashore. One of them flourished his big straw hat in a friendly gesture.

"Better send the second mate over with a couple of men, Mr. Duff," suggested Captain Cary. "Mr. Panchito is a sociable cuss and perhaps he can find out something."

The rotund, vivacious Mr. Panchito was delighted to oblige. As a former officer of the Colombian navy, he flattered himself that he possessed the aplomb, the diplomatic approach. He assured Mr. Duff that he would turn those strangers inside out. They could conceal nothing from him. Into a skiff he bounded and was rowed over to the schooner which displayed no symptoms of excitement.

Señor Ramon Bazán, on the contrary, was in a stew of impatience to be set ashore. It was the noon hour, and the sun was insufferably hot for a rickety old gentleman to explore the jungle and the rocky ravines. Richard Cary advised waiting, but was met with sputtering obstinacy. They were to take the precious chart drawn by the own hand of the infamous Captain Thompson of the brig *Mary Dear*, also a compass and a surveyor's chain to measure the distances in rods and feet. After finding the lay of the land, they could rest much easier. At their convenience they could unload the equipment and make a camp.

Richard Cary kept his own misgivings to himself. It had strained his credulity to accept the secret chart as authentic. Granted this, however, the face of the island must have been considerably changed in a hundred years. Naked scars showed where the rock and gravel had slid from the steep hillsides. The water overflowing the crater-like bowl

fed by living springs had been eating the soil away and depositing it elsewhere. The cliffs, however, might have resisted this erosion. If there were natural caves in them, and these had not been buried too deep in débris, possibly the treasure chart of Señor Bazán might be used as a guide.

The blurred notations and rude symbols had been inscribed on the chart by the hand of a man familiar with Cocos Island. The safe channel for a vessel entering the bay was correctly indicated. And in these first glimpses of the rugged landscape, it was mightily persuasive to study such detailed directions as "*N.N.E. 5 rds. to water-course . . . thence 9 rds. 7 ft. E. by W. ½ W. to face of cliff . . . thence follow ravine to big boulder bearing S.S.W. from hump of Hill & due South from Stone on beach which Stone is carved with letters H.M.S. Jason 1789: . . .*"

There was some delay in getting the exploring party ashore. Señor Bazán had to be humored. A pitiable agitation muddled his wits. He had to pore over the chart again. Compass and surveyor's chain were not enough, he suddenly decided. They ought to carry axes, picks, and shovels, on the chance of stumbling across the place where the treasure was unmistakably concealed. Some of the crew must go with them and carry rifles. There were strangers on the island. They might be lawless men. It was for Ricardo to be prepared to drive them away if they came near enough even to spy on the party from the *Valkyrie*.

By this time Mr. Panchito was returning from his diplomatic mission to the schooner. He was all animation and importance. Yes, he had found out everything. It was a treasure expedition, from Guayaquil. They had been three months on the island, and the sailors were very tired of it. Now they felt in better spirits because their leader had been overheard to say that he had given up hopes of finding any

gold and silver. He would soon be sailing back to Guayaquil. He was a most extraordinary man, this leader. He had attacked Cocos Island as if he intended to tear it to pieces, with powerful machinery that tossed the great rocks about like pebbles and moved thousands of tons of gravel. He was a mining engineer well known in Ecuador.

"Did they tell you his name?" interrupted Chief Officer Bradley Duff.

"Don Miguel O'Donnell, but he is not Irish," replied Mr. Panchito.

"Huh, I know that," grunted Mr. Duff. "It's like the O'Reilleys in Cuba and the O'Higgins in Chile. They were Irish some ways back. And it still crops out in their blood. And so we've run afoul of this O'Donnell highbinder from Ecuador! Now what do you think of that! He calls himself a mining engineer, does he? Maybe he is. All I know is that he has been mixed up in trouble enough to please any Mike O'Donnell. Concessions and politics and high-class devilment in Ecuador for years and years. I was captain of a dredge in Guayaquil harbor one time. From the stories I heard, it was Don Miguel O'Donnell that really backed General Eloy Alfara in the revolution of 1905 that bumped President Cordero off his perch. How about it, Señor Bazán? You may have the straight dope."

Ramon Bazán was more troubled than ever. He took hold of the ship's rail for support. Wearing a great cork helmet and leather gaiters, a canteen slung over his shoulder, he looked like a queer little caricature of a tropical explorer.

"Don Miguel O'Donnell on Cocos Island?" he wheezed, in a gusty flare of passion. "May he suffer ten million torments! Colombia knows him as well as Ecuador, Mr. Duff. He is very wise and very bold, a man of brains.

I tell you, we must sleep with both eyes open. Bad luck has come to us. If Don Miguel O'Donnell suspects us of knowing where the treasure is, he will stop at nothing at all. A soldier of fortune, Ricardo? This one is a *piratico* of the most up-to-date pattern."

"He sounds entertaining," hopefully suggested Ricardo. "He does things in the grand manner. Just now he is tearing Cocos Island to pieces, or pulling it up by the roots, according to Mr. Panchito. I like his style."

"The grand manner is right," grumbled Bradley Duff. "Somebody staked him on this proposition. A syndicate, perhaps. He always talks big and gets away with it."

It was apparent to Richard Cary that old Ramon Bazán had been shaken by enough excitement for one day. Don Miguel O'Donnell was the last straw. It was therefore sensible to suggest:

"Why not sit tight aboard ship for a day or two and see if this other outfit really intends to weigh anchor? Mr. Panchito has a notion that they are about through. Unless we show our hand, this enterprising gentleman from Ecuador won't think of interfering with us."

"Right you are, Captain Cary," agreed Bradley Duff. "Let's wait him out. It may avoid getting in a jam. Why not keep our business to ourselves?"

This rational advice infuriated Señor Bazán. Wait in idleness on the deck of a ship and look at the cliffs of Cocos Island with its fabulous riches almost within his grasp? Why had he placed this giant of a Captain Ricardo in command of the expedition? To smash through all obstacles, to use his wonderful strength and courage. Was the Yellow Tiger of Cartagena afraid of matching himself against this Don Miguel O'Donnell? He, Ramon Bazán, was an aged man with one foot in the grave, but he was eager to go

ashore and begin operations. There were men and rifles enough . . .

The tirade was quelled by Ricardo, who thrust his employer into a deck-chair, fanned him with the cork helmet, and announced:

"If you rave any more, Papa Bazán, your heart will go funny, and then where are you? Unless you take care of yourself, I can't let you go ashore at all. You are not fit to leave the ship to-day. Now please stay in the shade and keep cool and collected."

This high-handed behavior dumbfounded poor Papa Bazán. He dashed the cork helmet to the deck and kicked it like a football. Ricardo pleasantly suggested tucking him in and locking the door. This ended the tantrum. The owner of the *Valkyrie* curled up in the chair and disconsolately talked to himself.

The boyish chief engineer, Charlie Burnham, came strolling along, bright-eyed and eager to insert himself into whatever ructions might show above the horizon.

"Come along with me, Charlie," said Captain Cary. "Let's take a look at this Cocos Island. I may pay Don Miguel O'Donnell a social call. Keep a sharp watch, Mr. Duff, and let nobody aboard from the schooner."

"Atta boy!" blithely exclaimed Charlie Burnham. "Why not take the whole crew and run these Ecuador outlaws plumb off the island? They have had a fair crack at it, haven't they? Three months is enough. Time's up."

Woefully forlorn, Señor Bazán watched them set out for the beach in the skiff. Before striking inland they paused to examine the boulders strewn above high-water mark. On this one and that were roughly chiseled the names of ships which had visited Cocos Island at various times. It had become a custom singularly interesting. Richard Cary

felt a thrill when he discovered a massive stone on which the weather had almost obliterated the lettering, but it was possible to decipher this much:

"*H . . J . . . N–1–7–9—*"

"Here we are, Charlie," cried Richard Cary. "We couldn't ask anything better than this. This must be '*H.M.S. Jason 1789.*' Now we head due north to what the chart calls 'the hump of the hill.' We are going at the thing backward, but this is good enough for to-day. I want to work out a rough position and select a place for a camp. We may have to cut a trail and so on."

To their surprise and uneasiness, a trail already led due north from the stone on the beach. The trees and undergrowth had been chopped out, holes filled with broken stone, two or three small water-courses bridged with logs and plank. Wheeled vehicles had worn deep ruts in the soil. The crew of the schooner must have dragged heavy burdens over this pathway through the cocoanut groves and jungle. Observant Charlie Burnham picked up an iron bolt and a pipe coupling of large dimensions. He remarked that it knocked the romance out of treasure hunting when you made an engineering job of it.

Curiosity urged them along at a breathless gait. They emerged into the wide bed of a dry ravine and followed the path until it climbed to a small plateau or level area barricaded on one side by crumbling cliffs. They could hear the noise of rushing water. It was as loud as a cataract. They halted to reconnoiter. Charlie Burnham craned his neck to stare up at the broken slope of the great hill that towered far above the cliffs, the hill that loomed so conspicuously from seaward like a dead crater.

"Do you see that rusty streak that runs down the hill, Captain Cary? I've guessed it. This Don Miguel O'Don-

nell has tapped the little lake way up yonder. That streak is a line of pipe. He has a dandy head of pressure for hydraulic mining. Tearing the island to pieces? I'll say he is. He's trying to wash the treasure out. Some stunt!"

They followed the noise of rushing water and came to chaotic banks of gravel and a wooden sluice-box that poured its muddy torrent into a brook. A little way beyond it was a tent, and several huts built of boards. What fascinated them was a heavy steel nozzle at the end of the iron pipe leading down the hillside. A solid stream of water leaped from the nozzle. One man easily guided and turned it as a gunner lays his piece on the mark.

The water was like a projectile. It bored into the looser soil of the hill where it had slid down to pile up at the base of the cliff. Gravel and broken rock were swept down to the sluice or flung aside.

"And to think we have got to break our backs with the old pick and shovel, or drilling holes for blasting charges," lamented Charlie Burnham.

"But this bright scheme hasn't found any treasure for him," replied Cary.

They advanced toward the tent. A hammock was swung near it. In it reclined a man who smoked a cigar and read a book. He glanced up, was quickly on his feet, and walked to meet the visitors. Don Miguel O'Donnell was much nearer sixty than fifty years old, but physically he appeared to be in his prime. He was well-knit, vigorous, and taller than the average. His cheek was ruddy. At the corners of his eyes, however, the wrinkles spread in a network of fine lines. He looked more like an O'Donnell than a native of Ecuador.

It seemed odd to hear his courteous greeting in Spanish. Richard Cary fumbled a few phrases in response. Don

Miguel apologized and his smile was engaging as he said in fluent English:

"I saw the Colombian flag on your steamer, my dear sir. But there is not a man in all Colombia like you. You are —"

"I am Captain Cary of the *Valkyrie*, and this is the chief engineer, Mr. Burnham."

"An excursion for pleasure to Cocos Island?" observed Don Miguel, watching them closely. "You are interested in my mining operations? There is nothing to hide. I have been disappointed."

"And you are going home soon, sir?"

"Perhaps. It may amuse me to stay and look at you. One of my men reports that you sent an officer to the schooner. The second mate? A fat young man with curly hair who chatters like a parrot."

"Quite correct. That was Mr. Panchito," replied Cary. "I wanted to find out."

"And you found out? My men asked some questions of your Mr. Panchito. He was delighted to tell them. Señor Ramon Bazán has come to camp on Cocos Island for his health?"

The manner was genial, but the voice conveyed a certain amusement, ironical and patronizing. Thus might the wandering Ulysses, crafty and vastly experienced, have addressed beguiling words to his own simple-minded sailormen on some other desert island of a blue sea.

Young Charlie Burnham was nothing if not direct. He broke in to say: "Quit your kidding. You know exactly what we came for, and we expect to get it. Mr. Panchito is as leaky as a basket. I'll bet he told your men all he knew and then some. But there's no harm done."

"I will be frank with you, gentlemen," cordially ex-

claimed Don Miguel O'Donnell, who showed no resentment. "My own chart of this pirates' treasure was made by the boatswain of Benito Bonito's ship. The rascal died in prison in Guayaquil. The chart was found by accident, a few years ago, in a pile of old prison records and papers. As you say, Señor Burnham, I knew exactly what I came for and I expected to get it. May you have more success. My Cocos Island Exploration Company has wasted its money."

The visitors from the *Valkyrie* eyed each other dubiously. If the chart of Benito Bonito's boatswain had failed to locate the treasure, what about the chart of Captain Thompson of the brig *Mary Dear?* This was poor news for Señor Ramon Bazán. They would say nothing about it.

"If you decide to stay longer, Don Miguel," said Cary, "I see no reason why we should get in each other's way. We shall be digging a good many rods from here."

The adventurer from Ecuador had been shrewdly appraising the massive candor of the Yankee shipmaster. Plausibly he suggested:

"Why not a partnership, Captain Cary? You have your own secret information. I have the machinery, with more iron pipe in the hold of my schooner if we need a longer line."

"Señor Bazán will not agree to that," said Cary, rather curtly. "He prefers to go it alone."

"Ah, old Ramon has a long memory and a short temper," chuckled Don Miguel O'Donnell. "I was a young man then, when he had an ambition to be the president of Colombia. To some extent I helped his enemies. It hurt him to spend money. He might have had my support, but no matter — I know your Ramon Bazán, as it happens. If he comes to Cocos Island he bets on a sure thing. But you

will find it enormous labor, so much rock and gravel have tumbled from the hill since the pirates buried the treasure of Lima. My bargain is a good one, Captain Cary. I beg you to consider it."

"Señor Bazán wouldn't trust you, sir," frankly declared Cary. "His dislikes are very violent."

"Is it necessary to obey his orders?" suavely returned Don Miguel O'Donnell. "Why not arrange this business without him? I include your chief engineer, Mr. Burnham. He will be most useful. To let a greedy old man expect most of this treasure for himself, to let him stand in the way of a partnership with me, is absurd, Captain Cary. Your Colombian sailors will soon be tired of digging in this gravel. Even a man like you will fail unless you let me help you. You see my equipment. Think of the money it has cost me."

"Do you intend to take it with you?" asked Charlie Burnham.

"A bright young man," smiled Don Miguel. "You can use it for yourself? Wait a minute. What do you say, Captain Cary?"

"My owner will have no dealings with you, and that goes for his officers," was the brusque response. "I should say that he has you sized up about right. You ask me to be disloyal to him, do you, to make a private dicker and throw him over? Then how do I know you would be on the level with me? Nothing doing. We play our own game and I warn you to keep clear of it."

"Most big, strong men are stupid," amiably observed Don Miguel. "You have no objections if I stay and guard my property?"

"Not as long as you leave ours alone," declared Cary.

His voice had a deeper note. The blue eye had a frosty

glint. Charlie Burnham nudged him. It was time for them to put their heads together. They bade Don Miguel O'Donnell good-day. He was affable, polite, and apparently entertained by the crassness of youth. Until the arrival of these ingenuous Americans, one could see that he had been bored to extinction.

As they scrambled down to the dry ravine, Charlie Burnham remarked, with some heat:

"One smooth guy, Captain Cary. He would double-cross his own grandmother. What's the answer? It don't look much like waiting him out. Shall we go ahead?"

"It looks that way, Charlie. I don't know how many men he has. After we begin work, is he liable to jump us? I can't put our whole crew in camp. It would be foolish to leave the steamer without protection."

"Sure it would. And I mustn't let the fires go dead. If it came on to blow hard, we might have to steam out of the bay. And you'll need an anchor watch, of course."

"Well, we can get organized by to-morrow. Now let's see what we can do with this next bearing, from the hump of the hill and along the ravine."

They floundered through dense growth and over gullied ground until they had traversed the estimated distance in rods. No attempt was made to measure it accurately. This brought them to a lower rampart of cliff, crumbled and rotten, in which bushes and creepers had found root. There were wide fissures, as though an earthquake had shaken the limestone formation. Richard Cary made a hasty calculation. There was no other "face of cliff" near by. They could not be very many rods from the spot. Here was an agreeable camp site in a grove of cocoanut palms, with a spring of clear water just beyond it.

"We shall have to make our own trail to the bay," said

Cary, "but it's not as rough as I expected. We don't want to pack our stuff in over Don Miguel's road."

"Leave him alone," agreed Charlie Burnham. "I don't feel neighborly. He'll have me sitting up nights."

"Why, there would be no fun in it without him," cheerfully protested Richard Cary. "It would be a chore, like digging post-holes back on those New Hampshire farms of ours. I didn't dare expect anything as good as this Don Miguel O'Donnell. This may turn out to be livelier than Cartagena."

CHAPTER XX

RICARDO PLAYS IT ALONE

TWENTY-FOUR hours sufficed to cut a trail with machetes, and pitch the tents in the cocoanut grove. One of them was promptly occupied by Señor Bazán, who was elated at seeing things move in such brisk and orderly fashion. His faith in his yellow-haired captain was restored. There had been no waiting upon the movements of the interlopers from Ecuador. If Don Miguel O'Donnell should presume to interfere, so much the worse for him. Ricardo was the man to conquer him.

Privately Ricardo was not so certain of this. He had his moments of serious apprehension. He could not quite imagine the resourceful Don Miguel as sailing away empty-handed if there was the smallest chance of finding hints or clues more promising than his own. Might was right on Cocos Island. And the bold O'Donnell had never been hampered by scruples or lack of wit.

It was difficult to ascertain how many men were in his party. They were scattered, a few on the schooner, others carrying supplies, the rest in camp or working on the hydraulic pipe-line along the hillside. They kept away from the *Valkyrie*'s company, nor did Don Miguel himself display a neighborly spirit. The inference was that he considered himself too much the gentleman to intrude. It had been conveyed to him that he was unpopular with Señor Bazán.

After painstaking measurements, Captain Cary felt satisfied that he had chosen the likeliest spot to begin digging. To a certain extent it was guesswork. The "great tree"

noted on the chart had disappeared. There was more than one "big boulder" in the ravine. Three of the bearings, however, were accurately established, the H.M.S. *Jason* stone on the beach, the "hump of the hill," and the face of the cliff. The compass and chain helped to fill the gaps. Stakes were driven. Señor Bazán turned the first shovelful of gravel. Not content with this, he furiously plied the shovel until he wilted with a touch of fever.

Captain Cary took command of this party, leaving Mr. Duff in charge of the ship. A dozen men were picked for the hard labor at the camp. No more could be spared at one time. They were willing and industrious. Why not? It meant filling their pockets with pirates' gold. The treasure would soon be uncovered. *El Capitan* Ricardo had shown them where to dig. He knew all things.

With the prevailing breeze the camp was in the sultry lee of the cliff. This made the days intensely hot and the nights breathless. Señor Bazán complained of his asthma. Mosquitoes tormented him when he moved out of his tent. Ricardo urged him to spend a night or two on the ship where the air had some life. He consented without much argument. A hammock was slung from a pole, and two stout Colombian sailors bore the old gentleman over the trail to the beach.

Captain Cary went with him, planning to return in an hour or so. He wished to find out from Mr. Duff how things were going on board the ship. Charlie Burnham was left in camp with orders to post a couple of sentries now that dusk was coming on. Mr. Panchito had appeared for supper and was delighting the weary sailors with songs and stories of the raciest description. He was excellent for their morale. He made them forget aching backs and blistered palms.

There was nothing to cause anxiety. Don Miguel O'Don-

nell had committed himself to a policy of watchful waiting. For the present no trouble was anticipated. The discovery of the treasure might provoke a crisis. Meanwhile it was prudent to be vigilant.

Mr. Duff was eager for gossip, having been low in his mind for lack of company. Cary found it refreshing to sit down for a chat with him on the breezy deck of the *Valkyrie*. There had been no stir on the schooner, he reported, a few men coming and going, but nothing to indicate an early departure. A gray-haired, soldierly man had come off in the afternoon for a brief visit, presumably Don Miguel himself.

Richard Cary was relating the news of the camp when the sound of a rifle shot made him jump to his feet. It came from the interior of the island. Another shot, then the staccato reports of a magazine emptied as fast as a man could pull trigger. They reëchoed from the cliffs like a fusillade. A rocket soared from the jungle and traced a scarlet line against the evening sky.

Captain Cary roared a command and two men popped into the boat at the gangway. He delayed to say to the chief officer:

"Stand by, Mr. Duff. If you need me, blow the whistle. We don't know what mischief the schooner may be hatching. We have to divide our forces. Charlie Burnham is in a mess. Watch out for my signal from the beach. We may want to shove off in a hurry."

"You will find the old hooker right here, sir," hoarsely rumbled Mr. Duff. "I wish I could go with you."

The two seamen tugged madly at the oars while Richard Cary, standing in the stern, listened to the renewed rat-tat-tat of rifle fire. It subsided before he leaped to the beach and dashed into the narrow trail. Soon he heard a man cry out

with pain, and the ferocious hubbub of fighting at close quarters. He upbraided himself for his folly in leaving the camp. He had been caught napping and tricked into a false sense of security.

Stumbling over roots and stones, he ran with the thin beam of a little flash-light to reveal the path cut through the undergrowth. He shouted mightily as he ran. He thought he heard answering voices. There was no more rifle fire. He was some distance from the camp when he saw a figure coming toward him. It swayed like a drunken man and fell to the ground. The fugitive was found to be a Colombian sailor whose sweat-soaked shirt bore darker stains of blood. Two others came staggering along the trail. Between them they carried a comrade whose head wagged grotesquely. Cary flashed his light on the round, pallid features of Mr. Panchito who dangled a useless arm and was gashed in the thigh. His gayety was eclipsed.

Behind them came the rest of the *Valkyrie* party, in tragic disorder. Charlie Burnham was limping with the rear guard, using his rifle as a crutch. He blubbered at sight of Captain Cary and was ashamed to meet him.

"The b-bastards jumped us, and it's all my fault," he sobbed. "They crept up on us just after dark. One sentry got his, with a machete, before he could squeak. We put up the best scrap we could, sir, but we had to beat it. For God's sake, Captain Cary, get the men from the ship and we'll go back and clean up."

"Steady, Charlie. You couldn't help it," said Cary, putting an arm around him. "Did you leave any men behind?"

"One, sir. We started to lug the sentry, but he croaked a little ways back yonder and we hid his body in the bushes. I don't know how many are hit. They caught us from three

sides and rushed us. We couldn't hold the camp. These Colombian ginks of ours put up a dandy scrap. You can't tell *me* a South American revolution is vaudeville stuff. I know better."

Cary had stripped off his shirt and was tearing it into strips. The able-bodied men were quick to imitate him. As best they could they bandaged the wounded who laughed and swore and begged cigarettes. For those unable to walk or faint from loss of blood, litters were contrived from boughs and saplings, using their leather belts for lashings. Cary slung Charlie Burnham over his shoulder and strode ahead of the others. He was sad and silent. It was for him to square the account with Don Miguel O'Donnell. Now that the thing had happened, he comprehended the motive. As soon as the *Valkyrie* party had begun digging, the place where they expected to find the treasure was clearly indicated. It told the secret of their own pirates' chart. Don Miguel had concluded not to wait, perhaps for weeks and weeks. He preferred to do his own excavating and make speedy work of it. There was no law on Cocos Island. A little bloodshed? It was of no great consequence.

Richard Cary spoke his thoughts aloud to the hapless chief engineer who could not help groaning now and then.

"He out-guessed me, Charlie. He was marking time until we showed him where to set up that hydraulic squirt-gun of his and get busy again. He thinks Señor Bazán has a sure thing. He told us so."

"That's my notion, Captain Cary. Ouch, I got a hole drilled clean through my leg. Chasing us into the bushes didn't bother that sudden *hombre* one little bit. He bats 'em high, wide, and lively."

"I wish I had stopped those bullets myself," sighed the master of the *Valkyrie*.

He came out on the open beach well ahead of his forlorn company. Carefully he laid Charlie Burnham on the sand and flashed a signal to the steamer. Chief Officer Duff answered with a blast of the whistle. He must have had the yawl manned and ready. The refugees heard the rattle of oars. Presently the wounded were lifted in over the bow and stowed against the thwarts. Mr. Duff handled the boat himself. Efficiently he transferred this sorry freightage to the deck of the *Valkyrie*. Richard Cary fairly rocked with exhaustion, a man sick in mind and body. Doggedly he pulled himself together to act the amateur surgeon. The colored steward displayed a competency unexpected. Between them they set about sterilizing and dressing the bullet wounds and machete cuts. One sailor's chest had been ripped by a blade and required a dozen stitches. Poor Mr. Panchito had an ugly fracture to set. A coal-black fireman was moaning with the torture of a bullet embedded in his back. Captain Cary had to probe and extract it. He did these things as well as he could, slowly, carefully, with fingers singularly deft. He had seen them done by other shipmasters with no surgeon on board. Including those less seriously hurt, seven men bore testimony that it had been a furious affray in camp.

Richard Cary dreaded an interview with Ramon Bazán, who was a trifle flighty with fever. He had emerged from his room and was flitting about in pajamas, very much in the way, and sputtering questions to which no one paid the slightest attention. At length, Cary found time to say, rather roughly:

"Why not thrash this out to-morrow? No use crying over spilt milk. You ought to be in bed."

"But I am not blaming you for anything, my son," was the surprising answer. It was a chastened, frightened Papa

Bazán who, for once, had forgotten his greed of phantom gold. "It may be true, Ricardo, that the pirates put a curse on their treasure. It poisons men and makes them kill each other. You would have been killed in the camp to-night. You are too big for bullets to miss. And these wounded men — they suffer and are so brave — and I am the one that brought them to this wicked Cocos Island."

The accents were mournful. Señor Bazán was lamenting for his children of the sea. He was the sinner that repenteth at the eleventh hour.

"You certainly do not seem like yourself, Papa Bazán," gravely returned Ricardo. The symptoms were as alarming as one of those sudden heart seizures. "I'm glad you appreciate the loyalty of your ship's company. And it is very decent of you to make it easy for me. What it amounts to, though, is that Don Miguel O'Donnell was too wise and bold for me. You were afraid of it, remember?"

"You will try to make him pay for it, Ricardo. I see it in your eyes. More men will be bleeding with bullets. You yourself may be dead. I made you come on this voyage when you wished to get out of Cartagena and find your sweetheart, that girl of mine, Teresa Fernandez."

"I shall find my girl. The world isn't big enough to keep us apart," said Ricardo, his scowl fading. "But I am not ready to quit Cocos Island. The only curse on the treasure is Don Miguel O'Donnell. You must let me work it out, sir. You don't have to strike your colors yet."

"Promise me you will not get yourself killed, Ricardo," implored the affectionate Papa Bazán. "I would not leave you buried on Cocos Island, not for the riches of Captain Thompson and Benito Bonito."

"My own funeral is not on the programme," replied Ricardo to whom this was an unfamiliar Papa Bazán.

"Please don't interfere with my orders. I shall have a good deal on my hands. Don Miguel rubbed me the wrong way. I don't like the way he did it."

The old gentleman consented to go to bed. Captain Cary made a tour of his patients. With luck he expected to pull them all through. He found the steward faithfully on duty as nurse. Climbing to the bridge, he stood gazing at the shadowy outline of the hostile schooner, only a few hundred feet away. His solid composure of mind had returned. He was putting his shattered self-confidence together again. It made him wince to know that Don Miguel was laughing at him. It was his first humiliating defeat. His men deserved better of him than this.

While he stood musing in the starlit night, he seemed to hear the voice of Teresa Fernandez as she had told him the tale of the great galleon *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and her ancestor Don Diego Fernandez — the tale of the two little English ships that had throttled the galleon like bulldogs.

The little ships of Devon, lubberly, as round as an apple, gaudy pennants floating from their stumpy masts, wallowing off to leeward, daring the devil and the deep sea!

The blood coursed through Richard Cary's veins. He paced to and fro, head erect, heart beating high. Was he to be balked of Spanish treasure? He was a Cary of Devon.

This Don Miguel O'Donnell was a worthy foeman. How many of his men were aboard the schooner? To-night was the time to carry her by boarding, before Don Miguel could entrench the camp and send more men to his vessel to hold her against surprise.

The *Valkyrie* had no Devon lads with hearts of oak, experienced at this game of swarming over a ship's side and clearing her decks. The Colombians had been demoralized

by wounds and disaster. A respite was necessary, to inspire the rest of the crew, to drill them, to show what was expected of them. They were bewildered, fatigued, and ignorant of the tactics of such an adventure as this. Another day, and they could be led against the schooner. Reluctantly the attack was postponed.

Mr. Duff tramped to the bridge and urged his skipper to turn in until daylight. The ship didn't need him. The wounded men were quiet.

"All right, Mr. Duff. I'll go below soon. I am not worried about the ship. You will look after her, but I feel like a daddy to those poor fellows that got hurt. It sort of cheers them up if they happen to be awake when I go the rounds."

"You take it too hard, Captain Cary," bluffly replied the battered veteran of a chief officer. "The men might have been stove up as bad as this in a shindy ashore in some port. I had a ship in Valparaiso one time — Lord love you, the police and the sailors fought it to a fare-ye-well."

"That wasn't Cocos Island, Mr. Duff. Now keep this to yourself. If things break wrong for me, you understand, you are to take this steamer back to Cartagena, subject to the owner's orders. And you can keep the command of her, I have no doubt, if she can be made to earn her way in coastwise trade. You have made good with me and with Señor Bazán."

"Thank you, sir. What's the oration about? Going to run some fool risk, are you? It isn't worth it, let me tell you. You are young and husky, and there's a fine life and a long life ahead of you. Why get bumped off in a tuppenny rumpus like this? Hell's bells, why don't you let me do the dirty work? Give me a chance to pay you back, Captain Cary. You fished me out of the garbage can and

put me on my feet. I'll go up against this Don Miguel O'Donnell the minute you say the word."

Richard Cary shook his head. He had said all he had to say. Daylight found him again on the bridge, intently studying the schooner. He was astonished and chagrined. Outwitted for the second time! Forestalled and beaten! During the night two machine guns had been mounted on the schooner's deck, one well forward, the other near the after cabin. No boats could hope to approach the vessel and throw men on board. To attempt it even by night would be bloody suicide. Richard Cary's intentions were snuffed out. The stout lads of Devon never had to reckon with streams of bullets sprayed from machine guns.

The day passed uneventfully. Men were always loafing near the schooner's machine guns. Another midnight hour came. The tide was flooding into the bay. The sky was slightly overcast. The stars were mistily veiled. The bay slept in a soft obscurity.

Captain Cary called Mr. Duff aside to confide: "This seems to be up to me. Please keep the ship quiet. Look and listen. If you hear me yell for you, bring your men over in the yawl."

"Blast my picture, sir, what do you mean? Are you going to tackle that armed vessel alone?"

"You do as I say. Watch me swim for it."

"The sharks'll get you. I wish I was big enough to put you in irons."

"Come along aft and see me off, Mr. Duff."

They halted at the taffrail. Cary took off his canvas shoes and stripped himself to the waist. All he had on was a pair of thin khaki trousers. At his belt was a holster. The flap covered a Colt's revolver of the old navy pattern. It was long-barreled, with a heavy butt. The two men

shook hands. Mr. Duff whispered a blessing almost tearful.

Cary footed it down a rope ladder. Mr. Duff peered over and heard a small splash. For the first time in many years he piously, genuinely invoked his Maker. He saw Cary come to the surface and swim steadily to make a wide détour and approach the schooner bows on. Very soon the swimmer vanished from view. Mr. Duff hurried forward and awoke his men with orders to be *alerta*, and to jump for the yawl when he said so.

Richard Cary was swimming at a leisurely pace, saving his strength, taking advantage of the favorable drift of the tide. He held the same course until he was well inshore and the schooner's masts were in line. Then he moved directly toward her, paddling gently and almost submerged, as silent as a bit of flotsam.

Thus he floated until high above him loomed the bowsprit. He was screened from discovery. Catching hold of the anchor chain, he steadied himself and rested for several minutes. He could hear two men talking somewhere forward.

Hand over hand he hauled himself up the cable until he could grasp a bowsprit stay. Another effort and he found a foothold, crouching between the stays directly beneath the heavy timber upon which the folds of a headsail had been loosely secured.

Again he paused and listened. He had at least two men to deal with up here near the forecastle. Their conversation still flowed in drowsy murmurings. They were not far from the forward machine gun, he surmised. He knew how to operate machine guns. During the war he had been a chief petty officer of the American Navy.

He took it for granted that the two machine guns were loaded and ready for instant action. Don Miguel O'Don-

nell was not a man to be careless in matters of this sort. To get his hands on one of them, long enough to sweep the schooner's deck with it, this was the hazard upon which Richard Cary was gambling his life.

Clambering over the bowsprit, he crept as far as the anchor winch. Between him and the two men on watch near the forward machine gun was the deck-house in which the sailors were quartered. It was his assumption that most of them were ashore in the camp to hold it against a possible sortie from the *Valkyrie*. He had first to surprise the two men just beyond the deck-house. They were standing close to the starboard bulwark. From where they were, the deck ran flush to the after cabin and the raised quarter-deck upon which the other machine gun was mounted.

The intruder was silent and invisible. He took the heavy revolver by the barrel but, on second thought, shoved it back into the holster. It might be better to have both hands free.

Like a yellow tiger he leaped from his ambush behind a corner of the deck-house. His bare feet slapped the deck in three great strides. The two sailors of Ecuador had no more than time to whirl and face him. He stooped as he ran and grasped one of them around the legs. The fellow seemed to rise in the air as if he had wings. He soared over the bulwark in a graceful parabola. Into the placid waters of the bay he shot as prettily as a man diving. He was yelling when he went under, and he yelled when he came to the surface. He made as much noise as a riot.

Meanwhile the active Ricardo had lunged to get a grip on the other seaman and toss him overboard in the same fashion. This one had a moment's warning, however, and he was wonderfully nimble. He dodged like a rabbit and fled around the machine gun. At this game of tag there

was no catching him. He scudded under Ricardo's outstretched arm and flew like mad to seek refuge with his friends in the after part of the vessel. A bullet might have stopped him, but the yellow tiger had business more urgent. Every second of time was precious.

He dropped to his knees behind the machine gun. His questing fingers told him that the belt was filled with cartridges. He swung the weapon to rake the quarter-deck and drive the enemy from that other machine gun before they could open fire on him.

He pulled the trigger. Brrrr-r-r — prut — prut — prut — prut, the mechanism responded in a ferocious tattoo amazingly sharp and loud as the headlands of the bay flung the reports to and fro. Checking the fusillade, he looked and listened. He heard shrill shouts, the scamper of feet, a man wailing that he was killed. The other machine gun was dumb. In this brief burst of fire he had driven Don Miguel's men to cover, but he could not hope to hold them there long. They could snipe at him with pistols and rifles from the cabin windows, from behind the mizzenmast, from the rigging.

He was in the open, kneeling at his machine gun, his body naked to the waist as a target discernible in the darkness. There was this to be said for him, that the schooner was his, from the bow all the way aft to the quarter-deck. He glanced behind him at the open doors of the forecastle. If any seamen were in there, they had too much respect for a machine gun to poke their heads out.

The voice of Richard Cary rolled out in a tremendous shout of: "Ahoy the *Valkyrie!* Boarders away! Shake a leg. I can't hold 'em long. Come over the bowsprit. Do you understand?"

The jubilant bellow of Chief Officer Duff announced that

he understood. His men were in leash, awaiting the summons to cast off. They had an account of their own to square. Richard Cary heard their oars bang against the pins as they shoved clear and put their backs into it while Mr. Duff hurled profane exhortations at their devoted heads. Captain Cary saw the shadow of the boat as it surged toward the schooner. It was for him to maintain the mastery a few minutes longer. What he dreaded and expected was a swift rally to snatch the after machine gun, find shelter for it, and sweep the *Valkyrie*'s boat. The possibility of such a disaster made him desperate. His hands would be stained with the blood of his own comrades if he should lead them into such a wicked trap as this.

Now he recognized the voice of Don Miguel O'Donnell who was driving his men up from the cabin into which they must have piled helter-skelter. This made the situation more critical than ever. The reckless soldier of fortune would not hesitate to pistol his own ship's officers or men if they refused to do his bidding. They would try to make quick work of it, reflected Cary.

A rifle flashed and then another. He threw himself flat. A bullet kicked a splinter from a plank beside his head. Several whined over him. He watched the flashes. Don Miguel had shrewdly scattered his men in various hiding-places. Without fatally exposing himself, Ricardo was unable to look over the bulwark and gauge the progress of the *Valkyrie*'s boat. He dared withhold his machine gun fire not another minute. It was the card he held in reserve, but if a rifle bullet should kill or cripple him, Mr. Duff and his shipmates would be exposed to slaughter.

He knelt behind the gun and carefully marked the flashes of the rifles. A bullet grazed his left arm. Another chipped an ear. Then he let drive with all the cartridges remaining

in the belt. It was a sustained, furious chatter of explosions. He sprayed the quarter-deck from starboard to port and back again. It silenced the enemy's fire and granted him a fleeting opportunity.

Jumping to his feet, he lifted the machine gun in his arms and tossed it overboard. This one, at least, could not be reloaded and turned against his own crew. Then he ran aft, jerking out the heavy revolver.

For an instant he halted behind the mainmast, in the middle of the ship, to reconnoiter. It was as he expected. Don Miguel's men knew he had blown away all his ammunition. They were coming out from cover, but not eagerly. Don Miguel was roaring at them from the cabin roof where he had been trying to pot Cary with a rifle. It was he himself who leaped down to aim the after machine gun. He was guilty of a blunder. His intention was to rake the *Valkyrie*'s boat before it passed from sight under the schooner's bows, leaving his men to dispose of Richard Cary.

Instead of this, he saw a tall, glimmering figure dart from behind the mainmast and come charging aft. His attention was diverted. He hesitated. Then he opened fire at the swiftly moving wraith of a man, expecting to crumple him in his tracks. Ricardo was too canny to make himself an easy target. He ran a zigzag course, on a headlong slant toward one side of the deck and veering toward the other side. It was a disconcerting, bewildering onset even to an experienced campaigner like Don Miguel O'Donnell.

Cary was running like the wind, and as he ran he blazed away with the revolver which barked like a small cannon. A machine gun on a deck deeply shadowed was a clumsy weapon with which to stop a man determined to

capture a ship single-handed or perish in the attempt. Don Miguel stood stoutly at his post, loudly swearing at the men who were ducking the bullets from that infernal revolver. The yellow tiger swerved again and bounded to the quarter-deck. He hurled the empty revolver at the man behind the machine gun. It was a missile propelled by an uncommonly powerful arm.

Unseen by Don Miguel, it struck him in the face. He reeled and fell. One of his men stumbled over him. Another lurched into them. In this moment of confusion, Richard Cary laid hands on the machine gun and wrenched it around to command the quarter-deck. A touch of the finger and he could have riddled the nearest group of three, huddled as they were, but the deed was abhorrent. Don Miguel had shown no mercy for the luckless *Valkyrie* party at the treasure camp, but this modern Richard Cary felt inclined to offer quarter. A machine gun was a detestable weapon for men who loved good fighting.

"Get below, you swine," he shouted, "before I turn loose on you! *Pronto*, now, and drop your rifles."

The two sailors with Don Miguel dragged him to the companionway, and he went bumping down into the cabin. Others were still skulking in the dark. Two or three came forward with hands upraised. They were glad to surrender. Cary called out a final summons. From the other side of the deck, a die-hard took a futile snap-shot at him with a pistol. Picking up the machine gun, Cary climbed to the cabin roof and deliberately swept the quarter-deck with a hurricane of fire. It smashed through woodwork and searched out the dark corners. It was the blast of death.

A wounded man came whimpering from his hiding-place. Another sprang up with a scream and hung limp over the

rail. It was enough. Richard Cary shouldered the machine gun and ran forward with it. He had achieved the vital purpose. His comrades had been saved from destruction. With a thankful heart he shouted to them:

"All clear. Come along and take the schooner."

The first man from the *Valkyrie*'s yawl was just coming over the bow. Wound about his waist was a rope ladder which he made fast and dropped. Up they swarmed, so fast that they were treading upon one another's shoulders.

Rifles slung on their backs, pistols in their fists, they crowded around their captain and clamored to be led against the thieves and assassins from Ecuador. Mr. Duff crawled over the bowsprit, the last man aboard. His years and his girth had hampered him. The others had rudely shoved him aside. He was puffing and blowing, and his temper was ruined.

"The scoundrels, they pranced all over me, Captain Cary. Where's this scrimmage of yours? Here we stand like a bunch of idiots at a tea party. What's that you're lugging on your shoulder? A machine gun?"

"One of them," laughed Richard Cary, affectionately thumping his chief officer. "I had to chuck the other one over the side. You might have got hurt with it. Hop along aft and finish it up. If you find any loose *hombres*, throw them into a hatch."

"Then you didn't scupper the lot?" eagerly exclaimed Mr. Duff.

"I had no chance to count noses," answered Captain Cary. "Take a look in the forecastle first."

"Let's go, boys," thundered Mr. Duff. "*Viva Colombia!*"

CHAPTER XXI

THE HAPPINESS OF PAPA BAZÁN

For once in his career, Don Miguel O'Donnell was a battered, defeated soldier of fortune. He had lost his schooner and was bound to accept whatever terms might be dictated, or face the unpleasant alternative of being marooned on Cocos Island. A prisoner in the cabin, he was stanching the blood from a cut on his cheek when Richard Cary came down from the deck and said:

"Here, let me fix that for you. My steward is coming aboard to help patch up your men. Sorry, but two or three of them are past mending. It was a dirty job you forced on me."

"I wish I had left you alone, Captain Cary," replied Don Miguel, without a trace of animosity. "I was the stupid one. It was in my mind that you might try to capture this vessel, but those machine guns made me feel easy. I lose and I must pay."

Cary smiled. He could afford to. It was a waste of breath to denounce this veteran adventurer as a murderous blackguard who had brought disaster upon himself. He had behaved according to his own code which gave the spoils to the victor.

"Aye, you lose," said Captain Cary. "You have until sundown to get your shore party and supplies aboard and make sail. If there is no breeze, I will tow you to sea."

"And if I am not ready to sail by sundown, what then?"

"I shall sink your schooner. And I won't feel at all backward about using the machine gun you made me a present of."

"Machine guns are trumps," said Don Miguel. "I am leaving Cocos Island before sundown. It will not be healthy to stay longer. To wait for another ship to take me off would be too much like Robinson Crusoe. Six months, a year? *Quien sabe?*"

"You are fed up with Cocos Island?" observed Cary. "I feel something like that myself, but I shall stick a while longer."

"To find the treasure, my dear young man? Yes, I see you are in a hurry to go back to your camp and dig, just as soon as my schooner is on the ocean again."

"Right you are. I expect to occupy the camp to-night. Señor Bazán will be fidgeting to get ashore again."

"I hope you will find something," very courteously replied Don Miguel. "Perhaps you will find something to-night. Señor Bazán seems to know exactly where to look for the treasure. I was not so lucky with my chart of Benito Bonito's boatswain."

Soon after this interview, Captain Cary returned to the *Valkyrie*. Mr. Duff was left as prize master with a guard of five men. Señor Bazán was found asleep in a deck-chair after wearing himself out with fears and anxieties. Ricardo felt his pulse. It relieved him to find that the old gentleman had survived such a racking night as this. His heart was behaving far better than could have been expected. Apparently the sea voyage had been good for it.

Well, there would be no more clashes and alarms on Cocos Island. The argonauts from Cartagena could remain as long as it should please Ramon Bazán to hunt for the pot of gold at the rainbow's end. They had found an awkward neighbor in Don Miguel O'Donnell, but he was departing bag and baggage.

Captain Cary slept late into the forenoon. The black

cares had lifted. His own wounded men were on the way to recovery. His was the satisfaction of having fought and maneuvered his way out of an exceedingly tight corner, with the favoring aid of the goddess of chance. He felt a young man's pride in defying the odds and smashing a way through adverse circumstances.

When he came out of his heavy slumber, Ramon Bazán hovered beside the bunk. His spectacles were on his nose. He was examining the chipped ear and the grazed arm which Ricardo had covered with strips of plaster.

"All's well," yawned the hero. "What do you say? Shall we shove off to the camp to-night?"

"I hope so," chirruped Ramon, who was in high spirits. "The men have told me all. Do not trouble yourself to talk too much now. Do you know what I have decided? To give you half the treasure as soon as we find it. It will be my gift to you and Teresa, three millions besides the gold ingots. You must chase after that girl and marry her, Ricardo, if it will make you happy. With this treasure you can live quiet and safe. If you keep on fighting like this, Teresa will be a widow. Of course, when I die you will get my treasure, too, you and your sweetheart, except what I give to the splendid officers and sailors of the *Valkyrie*. There is nobody to leave it to, only you and Teresa. Now you will have some fun in digging up this Cocos Island."

"Oh, I have had fun enough already, and a bully good run for my money," Ricardo assured him. "It is very fine of you to feel this way, but what do I want with three million dollars? Supposing we let it rest until we turn up the treasure."

"If we miss finding it," uneasily pursued Papa Ramon, "I have not much to leave Teresa. There is my house in

Cartagena, and some more land, but this steamer and the voyage have cost me many thousands of dollars."

"Please forget it," urged Ricardo. "If I can find Teresa and she still loves me, what else in the world do I want?"

"That girl used to tease me and call me a horrid old monkey, but I will never scold her again," said Papa Ramon. "Yes, Ricardo, perhaps there are more precious things than money. I have been learning it for myself. Loyalty? Is that the word? It is bigger than life itself. Why did you capture the schooner? Why will these men follow you anywhere you say? It is not for money at all."

"It is never too late to learn," smiled Ricardo. "I should call this a liberal education for all hands of us. Travel and entertainment, with frequent trips ashore. It puts it all over a cruise in a banana boat."

It was late in the afternoon when the watchers on the *Valkyrie* saw Don Miguel's party come down the road to the beach, dragging the last cart-loads of the stuff they wished to take with them. Their boats carried it off to the schooner. Prize-master Duff, at a signal from Captain Cary, withdrew his guard and returned to the steamer. A light breeze was sighing off the land. Shortly before sunset the tall sails were hoisted and the anchor weighed.

The schooner rippled slowly past the *Valkyrie* to trim her sheets and follow the fairway out beyond the headlands of the bay. Don Miguel O'Donnell paced the quarter-deck, a straight, vigorous figure of a man who bore himself gallantly. He raised his hat and bowed in courteous farewell. As he turned away, however, his hand went to his cheek, to touch the ugly cut that had marked him for life. It was a gesture which did not escape the scrutiny of Richard Cary. He made up his mind to steer clear of Ecuador. Soon the schooner caught a stronger draught

of wind and heeled to its pressure as she made for the open sea.

Captain Cary mustered a landing party and beckoned Señor Bazán. Alas, the old gentleman was the picture of unhappiness. It had occurred to him, as an appalling possibility, that the *piraticos* of Don Miguel O'Donnell might have discovered the treasure during their one day in camp. Perhaps it was some of the bullion in canvas bags that they had been trundling in the carts. To soothe Papa Ramon it was advisable to lose not a moment in investigating the camp. And so they lugged him along in the hammock slung from a pole.

To his immense relief, the excavation which they had begun close to the face of the cliff was found to be no deeper, nor had the gravel been disturbed elsewhere. Captain Cary's first task, after they had put the tents to rights, was to detail a burial party for the body of the Colombian sailor which had been hidden in the bushes during the forced retreat. Papa Ramon wept. He had turned quite sentimental. He would pay for many masses to be said in the cathedral of Cartagena for the soul of this valiant mariner.

The air was uncommonly cool at dusk. The wind suddenly shifted and swept in from the sea. It was a refreshing night for tired men to rest their bones in sleep. They were eager to be up with the dawn and resume the toil with pick and shovel. Therefore most of them were in their hammocks as soon as darkness fell. Señor Bazán was snoring in his tent, after pottering about until his legs rebelled. Richard Cary wandered to a smooth rock and sat down to smoke and ponder. His nerves were still taut. It was difficult to relax.

The camp became silent. The only sounds were the rus-

tle of the cocoanut palms and the music of falling water. For some time he sat there, and then prowled to and fro. The sky presaged fair weather. The sky was brilliant with stars, and almost cloudless. Little by little he felt lazily at ease. He decided to go to his tent.

Just then he heard a bell. Its notes were sonorous. The air fairly hummed with them. They were lingeringly vibrant. They were the tones of such a bell as had hurled its mellow echoes against the walls of Cartagena when the galleons of the plate fleet had ridden to their hempen cables. To Richard Cary's ears the sound of this bell seemed to come from a distance, and yet it throbbed all about him. It was the bell of the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* which had been mounted upon the roof of the *Valkyrie*'s forecastle.

He was accustomed to hearing it daily on shipboard as it marked the passing hours and changing watches, but even there it never failed to thrill responsive chords in some dim recess of his soul. Until now, however, it had not been heard as far inland as the camp. The fresh breeze blowing across the bay and the silence of night were conditions peculiarly favorable, thought Cary, but he stood in an attitude of strained attention.

Dong-dong — dong-dong!

Four bells! Richard Cary scratched a match and looked at his watch. The hands pointed to a quarter after nine. By the ship's time, two bells had struck and it was not yet three bells.

DONG-DONG — DONG-DONG!

The galleon bell tolled again, Four bells! So far away and yet so clangorously insistent, as loud in his ears as though he stood upon the ship's deck. He seemed also to hear Teresa's voice attuned in harmony with it, to hear her saying in the *patio:*

"There is something about this old bell, very queer, but as true as true can be. If anything very bad is going to happen to the one it belongs to, this bell of the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* strikes four times, *dong-dong, dong-dong*. Four bells, like on board a ship. When there is going to be death or some terrible bad luck! It has always been like that, 'way, 'way back to my ancestor Don Juan Diego Fernandez."

While Richard Cary listened, the bell sounded its warning once more, and then was mute. He was not dreaming, nor was he under the spell of those visions which had so often disquieted him. He rubbed his eyes and stared at the tents, the bare cliff, the yellow streaks of gravel. The sailors were asleep in their tents. For a long moment he stood bewitched and helpless. He refused to believe and yet he dared not disobey. He was pulled two ways. Common sense flouted it. What shook him free of this trance was the voice of Ramon Bazán who called out piteously. Cary ran to the tent and found the old man sitting up in his cot.

"Thank God, you have come, Ricardo. In my sleep I had a fearful dream. Four bells! I heard it and then I was awake, and I thought I heard it again. I feel very sick. Has the time come for me to die? You didn't hear any four bells, did you, Ricardo? I am shaking all over."

"Nonsense, Papa Bazán," exclaimed Ricardo, patting the bony little shoulder. "I heard the bell, but it just happened that the wind brought the sound to us. Four bells? Perhaps the ship rolled in a ground swell and swung the clapper."

"Then you did hear it, too?" quavered Ramon, clutching Ricardo's arm. "It is no nonsense, not when the bell sounds like that. We must get out of this camp and go back to the ship. It is the safest place to be. Not for six million

dollars will I stay here to-night. We must all go to the ship, I tell you. Will you take care of me, Ricardo?"

"Back we go to the ship, Papa Ramon," readily agreed Richard Cary. "I feel like a fool, but I'll confess I am creepy. I am whistling to keep up my courage. If there is a curse on this Cocos Island, we may as well get out from under. When it comes to fighting with spirits, a machine gun is no use at all."

"Quick, Ricardo! Get the sailors to carry me in the hammock. I cannot walk out of the tent."

Cary lifted him from the cot. He clung like a frightened child. At the lusty shout of all hands, the men came boiling out of the tents. They slept with one eye open. Was it another attack? They crowded around their captain. He was at a loss to explain it. The thing seemed too preposterous for words. While he hesitated, Ramon Bazán plucked at his shirt and implored him to make haste.

"Jump out of this. Vamoose! To the ship! On your way, boys!" thundered Captain Cary.

They obeyed on the instant. Some new danger threatened. *El Capitan* was very much alarmed. When he gave an order like this, it meant something. Excitedly they straggled toward the trail. A grotesque exodus for brave men, if they had known it, and Richard Cary reproached himself as a womanish coward, but he was in a cold sweat of impatience, nevertheless, to set foot on the deck of his ship. Trudging behind his men, he found himself glancing back like an urchin in a haunted lane.

The pace slackened. One or two sailors ventured timid questions. He was still evasive. He gruffly mentioned a warning message. They inferred that perhaps Don Miguel O'Donnell had come sailing back to make a stealthy landing. Bewildered but trustful, they plodded on, swinging

lanterns and sleepily chattering. The two who bore Señor Bazán in the hammock halted to ease their shoulders. The others waited.

A terrific explosion rocked the earth. The detonation stunned them. The first thought was that a volcanic eruption had blown up through the dead crater. They rushed to the nearest opening in the jungle. They could see the dark loom of the hill climbing to the little lake in the bowl at the top. It was undisturbed.

They turned to look in the direction of the camp. The sky was a glare of crimson. They could hear the crash of rock falling from the cliff, of débris raining from the air. Then came a roaring, grinding sound like a landslide. Huddled together, the fugitives were dumb until Captain Cary spoke up:

"I have a notion we pulled out just in time. Let's go take a look."

They rushed back to the end of the trail and out into the clearing beyond the ravine where the tents had stood. There were no tents and no cocoanut palms. They had to climb over huge heaps of broken rock which had been jarred from the crumbling, fissured face of the cliff. Their excavation was buried many feet deep in earth and stones dislodged from the steep slopes above the cliff. Great ragged holes yawned in the gravel banks. Richard Cary took a lantern and explored the chaos. He returned to report to Señor Bazán who had been laid on a blanket found wrapped around the splintered stump of a tree.

"Four bells was right," said Ricardo. "The camp is blown to glory. And a big piece of the hill is dumped on top of it. This Don Miguel was a poor loser. I wish I had killed him with his machine gun. It's easy enough to figure how the trick was done. He had a lot of dynamite left, so

he told his gang to mine the camp. They cut the fuse long enough to burn several hours. I stumbled over one of his iron pipes. They ran the fuse through it, I suppose. An excellent joke, said Don Miguel, eh, Papa Ramon? '*Perhaps you will find something to-night,*' said he. He has a sense of humor."

"He couldn't forgive you for whipping him," feebly piped the old man. "Four Bells, Ricardo! Now I do not have to die."

"I should say not. Now you can live to be a hundred. And we'll have to give you a vote of thanks for putting the galleon bell on the steamer. Not that I am convinced, but it was a most extraordinary coincidence."

"You are a fool, Ricardo," snapped Papa Ramon, with a flash of the old temper. "And Teresa would call you worse names than that. It was the intercession of the Blessed Lady of Rosario for whom the galleon was named."

A sailor exploring the débris with a lantern suddenly went insane, or so it appeared. He screeched, slid into a hole on his stomach, and wildly waved his legs. His comrades scampered to haul him out. Instantly they, too, became afflicted with violent dementia. Cary went to investigate. He caught up a lantern and peered into this fresh excavation torn by the explosive. A frenzied sailor was filling his straw hat with tarnished coins. Another was struggling to lift a heavy lump of metal, but had to drop it for lack of elbow room. Cary reached down and jerked the two men out of the hole. They danced around him, spilling Spanish dollars from their hats and shirts. He slid down and tossed out the weighty lump which looked like bullion fused and roughened by heat.

He ran to fetch Papa Ramon and to spread his blanket close to this miraculous gravel pit. The sailors darted off to

search for bits of board to dig with. One of them was lucky enough to find a broken shovel. By the light of the lanterns they made the gravel fly like infuriated terriers. They turned up more coins, hundreds of them, and a closely packed heap of those roughened lumps of bullion. They discovered rotten pieces of plank studded with iron bolts and braces. They piled the booty upon Señor Bazán's blanket. He let the blackened Spanish dollars clink through his fingers. He fondled the shapeless lumps of bullion.

He was a supremely happy old man, nor was his emotion altogether sordid. He was happy for Ricardo and Teresa. And the spirit of romance, the enchantment of adventure had renewed, for this transient hour, the bright aspects of his youth.

"We have found it," he gasped, his voice almost failing him.

"Don Miguel found it for us," replied Ricardo. "The laugh is on him, after all. I wish I could send him the news. It would make this the end of a perfect day."

Ramon Bazán chuckled and tried to say something. After a thickened, stammering word or two, his voice died in his throat. He swayed forward, his hands filled with Spanish dollars. They slid from his helpless fingers. Ricardo caught him in his arms and gently laid him down. The wizened brown face had turned ashen. It was pinched and very old.

In his shirt pocket was a little leather case with a vial in it. Richard Cary found it and forced a capsule between the bloodless lips. It failed to revive him. A second capsule was no more effectual.

The worn-out heart, which had been so often spurred by the powerful drug, had made its last rally. Presently Cary

discovered that it had ceased to beat. He told the sailors that Señor Ramon Bazán was dead. They were shocked and very sorry. Crowding around the blanket, they bared their heads and crossed themselves, earnestly muttering the prayers of the Church.

Even their simple souls comprehended that fate had not been unkind to this aged man. His departure was not essentially mournful. It could even be regarded as a felicitous ending. He had achieved the goal of his desire, which bright fortune is vouchsafed to few. Most men spend their lives in search of some treasure, hidden or elusive, and rarely do they find it. Nor do they understand that the joy is in the quest and not in the possession.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FACE OF THE WATERS

They wrapped the body of Ramon Bazán in the blanket, and Richard Cary took the light burden in his arms to carry it back to the ship. It was right and proper that he should be the bearer. It appealed to him as an affectionate duty. In the morning they would build a coffin and find a burial-place beyond high-water mark on the beach. It was a pleasanter spot to lie than in the unholy desolation of this torn landscape near the cliff, with its recent memories of bloodshed and commotion, and its ancient memories of abominably evil deeds.

A subdued procession followed Richard Cary down the dark trail. The Colombian sailors whispered uneasily and were very willing to await the friendly light of day before trying to find more treasure. Could it be that the very touch of the Spanish dollars and bullion had killed Señor Bazán? Had an unearthly vengeance smitten him because he had led them straight to the place where the treasure was, with that pirates' chart of his? If he had not come to Cocos Island, the secret hoard would still be undisturbed.

There were things that no man could explain, said they. What was the message that had warned *El Capitan* Ricardo to flee from the camp? How had it been brought to him? It had saved them all from being as dead as poor Señor Bazán. It was a question whether honest sailormen had not better let that treasure alone. Life was sweet to them. However, it was for *El Capitan* Ricardo to tell them what should be done.

When morning came, the *Valkyrie* displayed the Colombian colors half-masted. The owner of the ship reposed in his own room, a peaceful old man whose fevered anxieties were stilled, who had acquired a certain dignity denied him in life. Chief Officer Bradley Duff stole in to look at him. Emotional in such circumstances, he blew his crimson nose and wiped his eyes. He did not know just why, for there was no reason to give way to grief. In his time he had seen many a better man slip his cable. Dutifully he muttered aloud:

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, and what do you know about that? Anyhow, you got what you wanted, didn't you, Papa Ramon, and you sailed off into the great beyond as happy as a kid with a Christmas stocking. There is only one drawback. Coin to blow and no chance to blow it! It breaks my heart to think of a thing like that. But, hell's bells, what could an old man blow it on? Here's hoping you have laid up treasure in heaven, for it's your only bet —"

Richard Cary interrupted this impromptu elegy and beckoned the chief officer outside to say:

"All hands will go ashore that can be spared from duty, Mr. Duff. Clean clothes — make them look as smart as you can. At ten o'clock this forenoon."

"At four bells, sir?"

"Yes, at four bells. It seems appropriate. Have the bell tolled during the burial service."

"Right, Captain Cary. Let me tell you, though, the prickles ran up and down my back when the man on watch banged out four bells at six o'clock this morning. If it's all the same to you, I won't have four bells struck after to-day."

"I am not very anxious to hear it myself, Mr. Duff. And

so you heard it last night when I did? The bell actually rang itself? Did you look at the clock?"

"I looked at the clock with my two eyes as big as onions," earnestly answered Mr. Duff. "It was eighteen minutes after nine. I had come on deck after saying good-night to the chief engineer. Charlie was fussing and cussing some because his leg hurt him, and he was missing all the excitement. *Dong-dong — dong-dong*, went the silly old bell, and I walked as far as the bridge to bawl out the anchor watch. Nobody was near the bell. Says I to myself, one of those Colombians has an extra drink under his belt and is skylarkin' to get a rise out of me.

"I stood there looking at the shack of a fo'castle we knocked together and the bell hanging in the frame on top of it. I'm a son-of-a-gun if the bell didn't ring again. I was as flustered as a woman with a mouse in her petticoats. I had heard the yarn — why Señor Bazán insisted on fetching this old relic along. Well, sir, I was froze to the deck like a blasted dummy, my mouth wide open, and I'm a liar if she didn't hammer out four bells *again*. Three times is out, says I, and something is due to happen. It did. That infernal explosion made my teeth rattle. From here it looked as if old Cocos Island had split herself wide open. I was never so thankful in my life as when you showed up on the beach with all hands accounted for except poor Ramon Bazán. That was his own private signal the bell tapped off, as I figure it."

"And you examined the bell?" asked Cary. "I haven't had a chance to look it over."

"Yes, sir. I made myself go for'ard and I climbed on the roof. I laid on my back and felt inside of this spooky bell. It was a brave deed, Captain Cary. Please enter it in the log that Bradley Duff was meritorious. The tongue of the

bell is hung on a swivel bolt and there is a lot of play in it, due to wear and corrosion. The ship was rolling last night, a strong breeze blowing straight into the bay and considerable ground swell. The tongue might possibly have swung to strike the rim of the bell, but it never happened before, not even in that gale off the Colombian coast. That's all I can say, sir, and I have to believe it or admit that I've gone clean dotty."

"What else can we say, Mr. Duff? The more we guess the less we know."

"But who will it warn next time, now that it has done its duty by Señor Bazán? What about that, sir?"

Ricardo was immensely startled. This had not occurred to him. He look frightened as he replied:

"Señorita Teresa Fernandez, his niece? I wonder if I shall hear four bells if any misfortune hangs over her. I may not know where she is. Suppose I am not there to help and protect her. You and I are certainly going dotty, Mr. Duff. I want to get this ship to sea again."

"First time I ever saw you down-hearted," said the sympathetic chief officer. "Sit tight and forget it. Señor Bazán was due to pass out anyhow. He was living on borrowed time. It's different with a healthy girl that knows her way about, though I know there's nothing worries a man as much as a sweetheart. Lord love you, I used to have 'em from Singapore to Rio."

Cary turned away. The talk was getting too intimate. He called himself an idiot for letting such strange fancies distress him. He had lost a devoted friend in Ramon Bazán, for all his whims and crotchets, and he felt badly shaken by it. When later in the morning the ship's company decorously assembled on the beach, he was deeply affected. Solemnly the bell tolled on the *Valkyrie*. A prayer-

book was lacking, but Ricardo said the verses he had learned at his mother's knee. And when the grave was filled, the sailors covered it with gorgeous wreaths of tropical flowers. An assistant engineer, with cold chisel and hammer, cut the dead man's name and the emblem of the Holy Cross. This they did for Ramon Bazán who had fared venturesomely forth from Cartagena to find his journey's end on this lonely, storied island of the wide Pacific.

It was not demanded of them that they should any longer be idle. And so Richard Cary led them to the devastated camp to view it by daylight. They were bold and eager again. The terrors of darkness had faded from their minds. Instantly they fell to enlarging the hole in which they had discovered the silver. They expected to uncover tons of it. Disappointment was their lot. In all they uncovered no more than three hundred weight. This seemed trifling. They were uncertain where next to explore. At random they shoveled the gravel and threw out scattered coins and bars of bullion.

The greater part of the treasure might be underneath the vast heap of rock which had fallen from the cliff, or it might be buried far under the landslide from the higher slope. All the rest of the day they toiled, but it was a gigantic task for a few men, and they felt baffled and discouraged. They doubted the truth of the saying that faith can remove mountains. There was no inclination to remain away from the ship after the sun went down behind the lofty hill. The shadows of night were fearsome company.

For Richard Cary the enterprise had lost its zest. He kept his thoughts to himself until evening when he went to Charlie Burnham's room. These two were kindred spirits, in a way, youthful tropical rovers who had wandered far

from rugged New Hampshire farms. They were sprung from the same kind of stock. They spoke the same language and were ballasted with like traits of character. Because they understood each other, Cary could lay aside the masterful pose of one whose word was law. It was safe to make a confidant of Charlie Burnham.

"Instead of raising such a row, you ought to be thankful you didn't lose a leg," said Cary as he pulled a chair close to the bunk.

A grin was on the homely, honest face of the chief engineer.

"Little old New Hampshire was never like this," said he. "Give me another week and I can steam slow speed ahead on a crutch. All that really bothers me is that I never got a crack at those outlaws. You'll have to hand it to Don Miguel O'Donnell. The trick of bumping you off with dynamite was neat. He was a mining engineer, all right. What's the big idea now? Do we get rich quick or not?"

"A tremendous lot of rock and dirt to move, Charlie, and then we don't know what's under it. Too much for this short-handed crew to tackle."

"I can swing the job, Captain Cary," eagerly exclaimed Charlie. "It means a trip to Panama to get me a donkey boiler, for one thing. I can shift a winch engine ashore and rig a derrick to handle that rock. Then I'll want some more iron pipe to run Don Miguel's hydraulic line over to our location. We can wash that dirt out in no time. Gosh, we'll root that treasure out like a pig in a manure pile. It's a cinch, now we know it's there or thereabouts."

Cary was unresponsive. His mind was far away. After a long pause he said:

"Listen, Charlie. Your scheme is good enough, and I don't propose to stand in your way. And I waive all claim

to any more treasure you may find. Out of what you have dug up already, I shall take the share that was promised me as master of the steamer when we sailed from Cartagena. That will be stake enough."

"You sound as if you meant to quit us," was the reproachful accusation. "Please don't do that. Why, I can see us cleaning up millions! And there isn't a man in the ship that wouldn't be tickled to death to give you half of it. You are the whole works, sir."

"There is nothing to hold me, now that Ramon Bazán is dead," explained Ricardo. "I had to stand by — there was an obligation — but now I am free to look after my own affairs and go my own way. You raise a question that puzzles me. This steamer is left on my hands. I am Señor Bazán's agent, I presume, until I get in touch with Cartagena, or find his niece. He left no instructions. You can have the vessel for a small charter price, if you like, to go ahead with your plans. I see no objection to that. She will be earning something, and Mr. Duff can take the command. If it costs too much to operate her, why not take her home to Cartagena and then come back in a small schooner?"

"Great Scott, Captain Cary, we can't lose all that time!" excitedly protested Charlie Burnham, rumpling his hair with both hands. "The boys will want me to charter this old hooker. They have dug up enough silver to keep things going for some time. But see here, sir, you've got me puzzled, too. How much of this treasure stuff honestly belongs to us? What if we do find the rest of it? Señor Bazán outfitted the voyage, and it was his chart that steered us to the right place on Cocos Island. We might not have found a thing, though, if Don Miguel hadn't blown the scenery upside down. What's the answer?"

"Send me word when you find your millions," laughed

Ricardo. "Then we can talk it over. I swear I don't know what the answer is just now. It is too thick for me. As far as I am personally concerned, I don't want to touch any more of the cursed plunder than I can help. All I ask is enough to send me on my way. A week more, shall we say? This will give them time to dig their fool heads off and tire themselves out. And by then you will be able to get down to the engine room."

"Huh, the only thing to make you talk this way is a girl," snorted Charlie. "It's all right, Captain Cary, and you have handled this proposition like a wise guy from start to finish, but the best of us skid. It's Cocos Island for mine."

"Well, I think I got what I was looking for," said Ricardo, with a cryptic twinkle. "I have only one fault to find with Don Miguel O'Donnell. He was born about two hundred years too late. I wish I might have met him, in these same waters, before machine guns were invented."

"He would have been there with the goods," heartily replied Charlie.

Captain Cary spent little time ashore after this. Mr. Duff was delighted to take charge of the volunteers who grilled in the sun and made slaves of themselves with pick and shovel. He had been a boss stevedore, among his various employments, and his Spanish vocabulary was like hitting a man with a brick. Tremendously he told them what to do and how to do it. They accomplished prodigies in moving rocks and gravel. He had to admit, however, that it was a job for Charley Burnham's ingenuity and equipment.

They did find more scattered bullion, blown hither and yon from some undiscovered hiding-place. It handsomely rewarded them for their pains, but made them more than ever dissatisfied. Not a gold ingot had they found. Gold

was the word to conjure with. It tormented them. At the end of a week they packed their silver hoard in canvas sacks and weighed it on the scales in the ship's storeroom. Captain Cary calculated that they had scraped together something like eight thousand dollars' worth of coins and bullion.

They held a conference. Mr. Panchito, the cheery second mate, addressed them with his arm in a sling. As a compatriot he was able to bombard the crew with an oration. He persuaded them to demand no more than their wages, to be paid them on arrival at Panama. The greater part of the booty was to be entrusted to the chief engineer as the managing director. He would make all the necessary arrangements for a return voyage to Cocos Island.

"Alas, my brave men, we must lose *El Capitan* Ricardo," passionately declaimed Mr. Panchito. His eloquence was hampered because one arm was in a sling. "What shall we do without *El Tigre Amarillo Grande* who conquered Cartagena with an iron bar in his hands, who has conquered this Cocos Island with nothing but his courage in his hands, who has conquered his brave shipmates with the goodness of his heart, who laughs at us naughty children and punishes us when we deserve it. *Viva El Capitan!* Shout as loud as you can."

They shouted, and Ricardo blushed. In this manner the finish of the chapter of Cocos Island was written for him. The *Valkyrie* sailed at daybreak, her engines complaining loudly as she plodded out to sea. Charlie Burnham sat on a stool in the stifling compartment and luridly told the engines what he thought of them. The firemen briskly fed the coal to her and, for once, there was no grumbling. They were rich men and they expected to become vastly richer.

It seemed as though ill omens and misfortune had been left astern. An ocean serenely calm favored the decrepit

Valkyrie as she laid a course for Panama. Only one of the wounded men was still confined to a bunk. It was a ship whose people had been welded together in a stanch brotherhood. Nothing could dismay them.

They made light of it when Charlie Burnham sent up word that the crack in the propeller shaft didn't look any too healthy to him, and he thought he had better tinker with it. Give him a day and he could fit a collar and bolt it on the shaft before it broke clean in two and punched the bottom out of the ship or something like that.

Captain Cary approved. The engines were idle while the *Valkyrie* rolled with an easy motion, and Charlie's assistants hammered and forged and drilled. Night came down with clouds and rain, and strong gusts of wind. There was nothing to indicate seriously heavy weather. It was murky, however, with a rising sea. Soon after dark Captain Cary went to the bridge to relieve Mr. Duff.

"With no steerage way she slops about like a barge," said the latter. "It may turn a bit nasty before morning. The barometer doesn't say so, but my feet ache more than usual."

"It will be a thick night, and some sea running, most likely," remarked Cary. "I don't look for a gale of wind."

"In a steamer not under control it feels worse than it is, sir. How is Charlie coming along with his shaft collar?"

"He'll have us shoving ahead by morning, Mr. Duff. And a couple of days more will see us in Panama Bay."

Walking the bridge alone, Captain Cary had never seen a blacker night than this, with the rain beating into his face and the spray driving like mist. Her engines stilled, the ship felt helpless and dead, while the seas swung her this way and that. It was a tedious watch to stand while the captain fought off drowsiness as the hours wore on.

It was almost time to go below when he saw a steamer's lights so close at hand that it startled him. Invisible at a distance, they suddenly appeared, glimmering red and green, out of this shrouded night. They indicated that this other steamer was on a course to strike the disabled *Valkyrie* which could do nothing to avert collision.

Cary held his breath, expecting to see the vessel turn in time to pass ahead of him. Instead of this, she threw her helm over too late. Blundering hesitation and a poor look-out made a smash inevitable. Richard Cary gripped a bridge stanchion and awaited the shock. There was nothing else to do. He heard a confused shouting in Italian. Then the vague shadow of a prow loomed a little way forward of the *Valkyrie*'s bridge, moving slowly as the other steamer trembled to the thrust of a propeller thrashing hard astern.

They came together with an infernal din of fractured plates and twisting frames. With a fatal momentum, the stranger clove her way deep into the *Valkyrie*'s side. It cracked her like an egg. Here was one peril of the deep which she was entirely too decrepit to withstand. It could not fairly be expected of her. She heeled over with a lugubrious lamentation of rivets snapping, of beams buckling and groaning. It shook the bridge like an earthquake. Captain Cary clung to his stanchion for dear life and stared with a horrified fascination. He was wondering whether this misbegotten Italian freighter proposed to cut clean through the *Valkyrie*, like a knife through a cheese, and proceed on her way. The crumpled bow could drive ahead no farther, however, and the two ships hung locked together.

"Hold where you are!" roared Captain Cary. "Keep the hole plugged! Don't back out! Let me get my people off before this vessel sinks."

The frightened Italian skipper was more concerned with investigating his own damages. Paying no heed, he kept his engines reversed and sluggishly backed out of the gap he had torn. Hysterically blowing his whistle he drifted off in the darkness until his lights were lost to view.

Richard Cary lost no time making signals of distress. His job was to get the crew off a ship that was dropping from under their feet. He could hear the sea rushing into the hold.

His first thought was for the men in the forecastle. He made his way over the splintered deck which was humped like a cat's back. Beyond the chasm in the ship's side, he found the wooden structure still intact, but tipped at a crazy slant. Already the men were bringing out the one wounded comrade who was unable to help himself. They were excited and noisy, but ready to do whatever *El Capitan* said. He drove them aft ahead of him, telling them to find their stations just the same as at boat drill.

By now the others came rushing up from the engine room and stoke-hole. The safety-valve had been opened to let her blow off. This was the only farewell ceremony that any one had delayed to perform. The water had been splashing to their knees when they scrambled for the ladder. Luckily the crippled Charlie Burnham had turned in for a nap and came hobbling from his room in the state of mind of a young man who regarded this as one thing too many.

There was no panic. As a ship's crew the habit of obedience was more than skin deep. This was the finish of the old hooker and it was time for them to go. Two boats were promptly swung out. There was room and to spare in them.

"Mr. Duff takes the number one boat," said Captain Cary. "Stow Mr. Panchito carefully and look out for his broken arm. The chief engineer goes in the other boat."

"What about our treasure?" demanded Charlie Burnham, in anguished accents. "If we have to lose it, this shipwreck is a mighty serious affair, let me tell you, sir."

"Let 'em go get it then," rapped out Captain Cary, "but you'll all be drowned if you fiddle here five minutes longer."

Jubilantly they dragged the canvas sacks from the storeroom and flung them into the boats. Even this brief delay was perilous, but Cary had not the heart to refuse them. So fast was the steamer sinking that the waves were even now breaking across her well deck. She was going down by the head, and her stern was cocking high in air. Had they stayed too long? As he shouted to lower away, Cary wished he had parted the fools and their money.

One boat plopped upon the back of a crested wave and was safely shoved away from the perishing ship. The other waited for the captain, but he told them to let go and pull clear. Glancing forward, he saw the *Valkyrie*'s bow plunge under in a ghastly smother of foam. Were all hands accounted for? He had to satisfy himself of this before he was willing to quit the ship. It was the imperative demand of duty, the final rite of a commander faithful to his task. Had any of those reckless idiots been left in the storeroom wrestling with their cursed bags of silver? He felt sure he had shoved or thrown them all into the boats, but he could not afford to carry the smallest doubt with him.

The ship was deserted. This he ascertained in a minute or two. Running to the side, he was thankful to find the second boat well away without mishap. They were yelling to him to jump. Just then a tall wave flashed and toppled across the deck. It washed him from his feet, rolled him over and over, and flung him against a skylight. The breath was knocked out of him. He felt the ship lurch and quiver in the last throes. A rending concussion tore her

apart. Clouds of steam gushed through gratings and hatches. The stern rose until it stood almost on end as the *Valkyrie* plunged under the sea.

Whirling like a chip, Richard Cary was sucked down with her. He was unable to help himself. Some convulsion of water spewed him to the surface in an eddy of foam and vapor. He was too feeble to swim or to cry out. Instinctively he kept himself afloat. All sense of direction was lost. He did not know where the boats were. The sea was much rougher than had appeared from the deck. It battered and strangled him. It bore him down into dark, seething valleys of water and tossed him up again.

A broken piece of timber scraped his shoulder. He thrust an arm over it and so eased his exertions. He tried to shout, but his voice was weak and broken. Frequently the water submerged him. Suffocation constricted his lungs. The strength had been hammered out of him. Once he caught a glimpse of the masthead light of the steamer which had sunk the *Valkyrie*, as though she were groping about to find the survivors.

He took it for granted that his own boats were searching for him. So black and windy was the sea that it was very possible to miss him. They would expect to be guided by his strong voice calling to them. He was drifting away from the spot where the ship had gone down. His energies were so benumbed that the loudest sound he could make was like the cry of a gull, unheard above the hissing clamor of the seas that broke over his head.

For perhaps an hour Richard Cary clung to the drifting piece of timber. Once or twice he fancied he saw the shape of a boat, but it was well to windward of him and his voice was blown away. Finding a man afloat in such a night as this was merest chance. Loyal as his shipmates were, they

were men accustomed to the hazards of the sea and it would be concluded that he had been drowned with his ship. It was a miracle, as he well knew, that he had been cast up alive.

He did not see the masthead light again. Probably the Italian freighter had picked up the boats and resumed her voyage. All hope of rescue was gone. Unless the sea quieted, he could not struggle much longer. Daylight was far away. Ramon Bazán and his ship, both gone, and now it was Richard Cary's turn. But they were old and worn-out. They had lived their lives. He had been so strong in the sense of invincibility, so secure in the supremacy of youth and strength. Life and youth, love and strength and ambition, the sea extinguishes them all.

Tenaciously enduring, refusing to surrender until the last gasp, he heard the galleon bell! It was tolling for him. He was too far gone to wonder. It seemed not in the least fantastic that the bell should be tolling his requiem, even though it had gone to the bottom of the sea. At first faint and far away, it was growing louder. A phantom bell that tolled in mockery! Its grave reverberations rose above the commotion of the waves to signal the passing of the soul of Richard Cary.

It tormented him to listen to the bell that had been drowned fathoms down. Why could it not let him go in peace? He rallied from his stupor. A phantom bell? He wildly denied and denounced it.

He became conscious of a curious illusion that the bell was drifting past him. Could he be wrong? Was it calling to him with a voice of help and guidance instead of mockery? It had saved him from death on Cocos Island. Was this another intervention?

He released his hold of the piece of timber and swam in

the trough of the sea, gaining strength for this last effort. What difference if he hastened the end by this much? The bell tolled in the air above his head. It was so near that it could not elude him, he babbled.

Like surf on a rock, the waves spouted over some dim floating object that bulked large. Richard Cary saw the wan flicker and curl of them. He put out an arm to fend himself off. His hand slipped along the edge of a board. He groped again and caught hold of a massive upright. Painfully he hauled himself up on a platform of boards awash with the sea. There he sprawled flat.

Soon he was able to sit and maintain his grasp of the upright which was firmly fastened to the platform. He could breathe and rest, although the water gushed over him. Reaching up, he touched the rim of the galleon bell. It vibrated to the strokes of the heavy tongue as the platform tossed and pitched with a motion giddily violent.

His refuge was the roof of the wooden forecastle house which had been torn bodily from the bolts securing it to the *Valkyrie*'s deck. Loosened by the collision, it had been carried down and later brought to the surface by its own buoyancy, perhaps not until after the boats had abandoned the search for their lost captain.

A haunted bell, but one that could be kind as well as cruel. Twice now it had preserved Richard Cary from the immediate certainty of extinction. He clung to his wave-washed raft with the bell clanging over him, but he had ceased to despair of rescue. He was granted a surcease from the unavailing struggle to survive. He dared hope to see another blessed dawn. With clearing weather and a falling wind, he might hang on and keep alive for two or three days. Other castaways had done so with much less pith and endurance than his own.

Meanwhile the galleon bell, riding in its frame, would be a conspicuous beacon by day. At night its brazen-throated appeal would carry far over the face of the waters.

His courage was hardened, the spark of confidence rekindled, and he felt strong in the faith that this was not to be the end of Richard Cary.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CASTAWAY

By conventional standards, Jerry Tobin, owner of The Broadway Front on the liveliest street of Panama, was a disreputable person. The queer, turbid world in which he moved had its own rigid standards of appraisal, however, and by these he was rated as a person of solid integrity. He was on the level. This verdict is sometimes denied those who sit in higher and more sanctified places.

In the era before the darkness of prohibition had dimmed the bright lights of his café on the Broadway of Manhattan, he had enjoyed the esteem of politicians, actors, race-track magnates, prize-ring celebrities, and gentleman idlers who respected his opinions and often accepted his judgments.

Prosperity had attended his tropical exile, but dollars could not altogether solace a homesick heart. Mrs. Mary Tobin was even more unreconciled, but she was never one to complain. Seldom questioning Jerry about his own affairs, she lived her life apart from them. When she had first known him he was a serious-minded, athletic young policeman on a Sixth Avenue beat and she was the daughter of a desk sergeant of the precinct station. In that neighborhood were her friends, her church, and her lifelong associations. In middle-age she had been pulled up by the roots, and it was hard adjusting herself to this remote, exotic environment.

Blown by the winds of chance, Teresa Fernandez had been borne in to her. Mary Tobin's loneliness and unspoken discontent were banished. This dark-eyed, handsome girl from Cartagena, bright and sad by turn, who

seemed to confide so much and yet paused on the brink of revelation, was a figure of fascinating romance. She flamed against Mary Tobin's quiet background.

Jerry was tight-lipped by habit. Teresa felt grateful for his reticence. Finding her in trouble, he had befriended her. Nothing was said about an impetuous antique dagger which had literally stayed the hand of an intruder called Sheeney George. With a delicacy that did him credit, Jerry inferred that it wasn't the kind of thing a lady liked to have told on herself.

It was distressing enough, as Mary Tobin viewed it, that Teresa had felt compelled to cut off her lovely hair and go wandering about as a young man. That Jerry proposed to find some way of sending her to Cocos Island did not seem quixotic. Mary Tobin was eager to aid and abet. This relieved Jerry's mind. The situation might have been awkward.

"Of course you will be helping her to get to her lover, Jerry," said sweet-voiced, motherly Mary Tobin. "And how can you manage it? 'Tis worth the money whatever it costs."

"I have found a gasoline yacht that's fit for to live in," he replied. "All I want now is the right skipper, and I have sent word to Captain Ed Truscoe that had a Canal towboat and quit her last week. He's a buddy of mine. You know him, Mary."

"A fine man, Jerry, but will we want to let Teresa go alone? I was thinking I might ask myself along, but I'd be seasick every minute and —"

"And you'd be in the way after she meets up with this walloper of a sweetheart of hers. The old crab of an uncle will be chaperon enough and more too. They'll want to wring his neck."

"But does it seem right to send her off by herself, even with Captain Ed Truscoe?" persisted Mary. "An older woman ought to be kind of looking after her."

Jerry permitted himself a grin as he gruffly exclaimed: "Miss Fernandez can look after herself, take it from me. Don't let that worry you. So it's all right to blow her to the trip, is it? It will set me back some berries. She wants to put her own money in it, but I said nothing doing. This is Jerry Tobin's joy-ride. Drop in and see us when you come back, said I, and show us your prize exhibit. We'll tell you whether he is worth it. If he isn't the goods, I will have to go get you another one."

"What do I care what it costs?" smiled Mary Tobin. "'Tis more real pleasure than I have got out of anything since we said good-bye to the flat on the West Side. From what Teresa tells me, this man of hers is the finest one that ever trod the green earth. Here's a woman that said the same when Jerry Tobin was courting her."

"'Tis worth something to have you blarney me like that," said Jerry, whose harsh face could soften with tenderness. "Well, we are young but once, Mary girl, and when we're young we want what we want when we want it. So I will get that gasoline yacht away from here in a couple of days if I have to shanghai Captain Ed Truscoe."

Thus it happened that Teresa Fernandez was whisked away to sea with no say in the matter beyond the affectionate gratitude that welled from the depths of her heart. The gasoline cruiser was small for an offshore voyage, but Teresa was too seasoned a sailor to mind the long Pacific swell. Captain Truscoe, veteran towboat man, was unperturbed in anything that would stay afloat and kick a screw over. He was a thick-set, bow-legged chunk of a man, hard and brown, who seldom smiled, and talked with an effort.

Teresa perplexed him. At table together in the little cabin, with a Japanese steward dodging about like a juggler, Captain Truscoe stared and pondered. Now and then he bit off a brief question or two.

"What about this uncle? Who let him loose?"

"He ran away from home like a naughty boy and I must coax him back," replied the amused Teresa.

"Better had. They tuck 'em in padded cells for less. Jerry mentioned a young man, master of the ship. What about him?"

"I am sure I don't know why he went away on this crazy trip, Captain Truscoe. That is one thing I must find out. It is all very much mixed up."

"Sounds so. None of my business, I suppose. Known Jerry and his wife long?"

"Not very. They were wonderfully good to me."

"They like you, Miss Fernandez. Jerry told me to keep on going if I missed your people at Cocos Island. The limit is off, says he."

"But how will I know where to go next?" cried the troubled Teresa. "I am sure we shall find them there. Good gracious, Captain Truscoe, don't you suggest such things to me."

By way of diverting her, he brought out photographs of his wife and three young daughters in San Francisco. His comments were terse.

"Nice woman. Thrifty. She saves my money. Good kids. I meant to go home, but Jerry grabbed me. You ought to get married and settle down, Miss Fernandez. Best thing for a pretty young woman."

Teresa blushed at this and turned the topic. There were long hours when she was solitary, and somber moods oppressed her. The sense of fear and uncertainty was like a

crushing weight. Jealously guarded was the secret of the real purpose of her quest. She was afraid of murmuring it in her sleep. It stood beside her as a dark shadow in the likeness of Colonel Fajardo.

Such were her meditations when the yacht sighted the lofty hill of Cocos Island and stood in to approach the black headlands that guarded the bay. Soon the passage opened to view, and the sheltered water with the glistening beach, the jungle, and the cocoanut palms. Captain Truscoe was at the wheel. Teresa stood at his elbow. Tensely anxious, she dared not say what was in her mind. The skipper bit off a chew of tobacco and rapped out:

"No vessel in here. What about that? A wild-goose chase!"

"Is there no other anchorage?" implored Teresa. "Why, I was sure we would see the rusty old *Valkyrie!*"

"No other holding ground for steam or sail. Look at the chart for yourself."

"But they were bound to Cocos Island," panted Teresa. "My friend the gunner's mate — the young man I met in The Broadway Front — he saw the *Valkyrie* heading this way when he spoke her in his destroyer. And Mr. Jerry Tobin was absolutely certain of it."

"Come and gone, maybe," said Captain Truscoe, "but I never heard of these treasure bugs scamperin' off like that. We'll take a look ashore."

He ordered the motor dory made ready. No sooner had the yacht dropped anchor than he went to the beach with Teresa. She felt a quivering apprehension of misfortune.

They crossed the level sand and came to the boulders strewn in stark confusion. Teresa saw wreaths of flowers, black and withered, on a yellow mound and the name of Ramon Bazán cut in the face of a huge, rough stone.

With a cry she ran to kneel beside the grave, her face buried in her hands. Her grief was genuine, her remorse a torment that she had been no more affectionate toward this fretful old man who, in his own way, had been fond of her. It was incredible that he should have ceased to live. From childhood she had taken it for granted that he would always continue to sputter and to flit about on his furtive errands. He had seemed as permanent as the ancient house in which he dwelt.

She was bewildered, all adrift. There was nothing to explain it, merely this pitiful grave amid the primeval desolation of Cocos Island. Captain Truscoe was both sympathetic and observant. He was studying the inscription on the boulder. The date was chiseled beneath the name of Ramon Bazán.

"Only two days ago," said he. "If your information checks up right, Miss Fernandez, they couldn't have been here much more than a week. And we no more than just missed 'em. A kettle o' fish and no mistake! Sorry about your uncle. You found him, didn't you, but it's a shock."

"Yes, he will never run away any more," sadly smiled Teresa. "He was very old, and I suppose it was time for him to rest. But how did he die, Captain Truscoe, and where is Captain Cary and the ship and all her people?"

"Gone somewhere, Miss Fernandez. Would it be back to the Isthmus? How do you feel? Want to go aboard or shall we rummage about?"

They moved away from Ramon Bazán's boulder and discovered the well-worn road with the wheel ruts, and a clutter of small carts and lumber. In so short a time this road could not have been made by the *Valkyrie* party.

"Another crowd, but their vessel has gone, too," said

Captain Truscoe. "Here's a trail off to the left that is fresh cut. That looks more like your outfit."

They entered the leafy path which had been chopped by the Colombian sailors. They advanced slowly with a certain caution. At length they discovered the devastated camp close to the shattered cliff, a torn upheaved waste of rock and gravel. They found fragments of canvas, bits of clothing, battered cooking-utensils, broken tools scattered far and wide. Captain Truscoe picked up an empty brass shell from a magazine rifle. He tossed it in his hand as he said:

"This was a violent place to be. Blown up and shot up. Quite recent. Any sensible man would leave it in a hurry and put to sea. I guess it was too much for your uncle."

Teresa was speechless. It was too much for her. She was frowning at a broken galvanized pail on which was stenciled *S.S. Valkyrie*. What was buried underneath those horrid masses of stone and earth from which uprooted trees protruded?

"I don't blame you for feeling upset," said the skipper. "This gets my goat."

"Oh, I don't want to stay here," Teresa found voice to tell him. "Please help me get back to the yacht."

She had been living in the hope that Cocos Island would be her journey's end, but now the road was blinder, blacker than ever. Later in the day she ventured as far as the verdure near the beach and gathered fresh flowers to leave on the grave of Uncle Ramon Bazán. Captain Truscoe sturdily explored the road built by Don Miguel O'Donnell and returned with an extraordinary story of the abandoned hydraulic pipe-line and elaborate equipment.

"All hands scurried away, like rats from a hulk," he reported, very hot and tired. "What next?"

"I wish I knew," mourned Teresa. "I can tell you nothing. You are much wiser than I am. I am finished. Now my poor uncle is dead, there is nothing to guide me. Is Captain Cary in command of the *Valkyrie*, or is he also dead on Cocos Island?"

"It does look mighty random," agreed Captain Truscoe. "There's this comfort — somebody was alive and able to take the steamer to sea. She never rambled off by herself. When it comes to figuring where she went, your guess is as good as mine."

"I can guess nothing. We had better go back to Panama. Is it not so? And I will thank Mr. Jerry Tobin and say good-bye."

"Better stay with 'em until you get your bearings, Miss Fernandez. Maybe the *Valkyrie* will turn up there."

"Perhaps. If not, I won't try to find the ship and Captain Cary any more. I have done all I could. If the ship does not come to Panama, I must go back to Cartagena. It is where I belong. I thought I could get away from Cartagena — from something very unpleasant for me — but it is no use. It must be as God wills."

"Stay away, if it's as bad as that, Miss Fernandez. All right, we sail first thing in the morning. Homeward bound means better luck sometimes."

They made a smooth run of it until a thick night with rain and a boisterous wind compelled the small cruiser to reduce her speed. She was tossed about more and more until Captain Truscoe hove to before his decks were swept.

Toward morning, Teresa Fernandez was in the drowsy state between waking and dreaming. She heard a bell. It was distant, almost inaudible. Her heart throbbed painfully as she listened. The sound came to her again, the

ghostly whisper of a bell, but deep-toned and familiar. It was like no other bell in all the world, by land or sea.

Was she dreaming? No, this was the stateroom of the yacht, with the water surging against the round ports. After some time, the far-away lament of the galleon bell came to her ears again. It seemed as though its intervals were cadenced, that it was tolling a message which she dreaded to hear. *Four bells! Dong-dong — dong-dong!*

She could interpret it. Uncle Ramon Bazán was gone. To her had been bequeathed the galleon bell. It was sending her its warning of some impending disaster. It meant that she was fated to return to Cartagena and so accept the penalty for the deed she had done. The bell had been taken from its frame in the *patio* and carried to sea on the *Valkyrie*. No matter where the ship might be, she would hear the bell sound its tidings at the appointed time. How could she doubt it? The legend had dwelt among her kinfolk for centuries. It was interwoven in the fabric of her inherited beliefs. And now that she heard the bell, she felt certain she would never see Richard Cary again.

The little stateroom suffocated her. She resolved to go on deck in spite of wind and weather. She dressed and snatched an oilskin coat and sou'wester from a hook. Sliding back the cabin hatch, she crawled out into the welter of rain and spray. The yacht was still hove to, riding buoyantly. Teresa groped her way forward to the wheel-house and wrenched open the door. Beside the hooded binnacle lamp stood Captain Truscoe steadying himself while the flying water swashed against the windows. He grasped Teresa's arm as he said:

"Lonesome down below? Nothing to worry about. This flurry will blow itself out with daylight."

"Did you hear a bell?" besought Teresa, trying to speak

calmly. "A ship's bell? No, you would not hear it. The bell was for me and nobody else."

"I can't hear much in here. Too much racket outside. What's this about a bell, young lady?"

"I heard it," she answered. "And then I thought — perhaps it might be just ringing inside my head —"

"I'll step on deck. There is nothing in sight," he replied, willing to humor her.

They went out together and held fast to a railing. In a vessel as small as this, the sea was very near and clamorous. Stolidly Captain Truscoe waited and listened, but he could hear no distant bell.

"You imagined it," he shouted in Teresa's ear. "Dishes and glasses banging about in the pantry, possibly."

"It is not ringing now," said she. "Yes, it may have been imagination. It was a strange thing to hear. It frightened me."

"Better go back to bed. The sea is quieting. I'll be shoving her along soon."

She hesitated and then went aft to the cabin, the captain escorting her. As yet there was no sign of dawn in the watery obscurity of the sky.

"If you hear a bell, you will call me?" she asked.

"Sure thing, Miss Fernandez. Hope you get to sleep. Your berth is the most comfortable place to be."

Troubled sleep came to her nor did she hear the phantom bell again. The sea was turning gray outside the ports when she felt the engines pick up speed. Rolling heavily, the yacht swung off to resume the course to Panama. To Teresa it seemed fantastic that she should have paid such serious heed to the fancied message of the galleon bell. It was a warning of another kind, that her nerves were all jangled. The hallucination ought to be dismissed.

This she was trying to do when there came a knock on the door and Captain Truscoe was saying:

"You were right. I heard the bell just now, off the starboard bow. It's not bright enough to see far, but I'll try to find out what that bell is."

"But I never heard it again," she exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

"Positive. You are all battened down like a bottle, inside here. There is no trouble about picking up the sound of the bell on deck."

Teresa flew into the oilskin coat. She was out of the cabin in a twinkling. Clear and musical came the voice of the galleon bell. It was ringing persistently, flinging out a brazen appeal, nor could Teresa detect the cadenced and ominous intervals of four bells. She understood why she alone had heard it so faintly in the night. Her ear was sensitively attuned to its vibrations. They had been an intimate part of her existence.

Now the bell was ringing for all to hear. It was somewhere in the gray waste of sea, mysterious and invisible. Teresa was reminded of the miracle of the marble pulpit which had been wonderfully borne up to float with the fickle currents until it was cast ashore under the wall of Cartagena, to be carried to the cathedral in devout procession.

"Santa Marta and the angels!" she piously exclaimed, crossing herself. "But I can see no ship at all, Captain Truscoe, and what is the bell of *Nuestra Señor del Rosario* doing out there in the ocean and making so much noise?"

"Gone mad, I should say. It may be on the bottom and a mermaid is pulling the clapper."

"It is floating, I tell you!" joyously cried Teresa, who was not mad at all. "For once it rings good news. You can

know that by the way it sounds. It is time for a blessed miracle to happen to poor Teresa."

Captain Truscoe wiped his binocular and gazed again. Daylight was driving the mists away. The lowering clouds were lifting. A clear sunrise was heralded. A dark speck was discovered against the heaving sea. The yacht plunged toward it, flinging the green water aside. The speck grew larger. Underneath it was a white ruffle of foam like surf playing on the back of a reef.

Soon they could distinguish the galleon bell suspended between two upright timbers which swayed wildly to the thrust and swing of the waves. The timbers projected from a platform like a raft. Huddled between them was an object that moved. It was a man who waved something white to let the yacht know that a castaway was on the raft.

Teresa Fernandez needed no binocular. Inner vision told her that Richard Cary was found. It could be no one else. For whom else would the galleon bell have wrought this marvel?

She watched him very slowly haul himself to his feet, like one dead with exhaustion, but indomitable. He stood holding himself erect, his arms around the cross-piece from which the bell was hung. His shirt fluttered in rags. He was drenched and bruised and battered. As a young god he towered in the sight of Teresa Fernandez, and his yellow hair was like an aureole.

The yacht swept to leeward of the raft and slackened way. Captain Truscoe and two men jumped into the motor dory. Richard Cary paid them not the slightest attention. All he saw was a girl in an oilskin coat and sou'wester, a girl who unconsciously held out her arms to him. Ah, she knew Ricardo loved her! It illumined his face even before his voice came huskily down the wind:

"My girl ahoy! This is the luckiest treasure voyage that ever was."

She blew him a kiss. Captain Truscoe watched his chance and jockeyed the motor dory close to the raft. Stiffly Richard Cary released his grip of the timber and poised himself with a seaman's readiness. Into the boat he lurched and fell like a log. His tremendous vitality enabled him to revive and to gain the deck of the yacht with two sailors heaving at his shoulders. They helped him to the cabin where he sprawled upon a couch.

Teresa followed. Maternally her first desire was to have him warm and dry, and tucked in bed where she could nurse him. She stood aside while Captain Truscoe ordered the steward about, demanding hot whiskey, blankets, and clean clothes from the biggest man on board. Shakily, with a man to lean on, Richard Cary was able to reach the captain's room.

"Please wait until the sea is smooth enough to hoist that bell aboard," said he. "Don't let it go adrift. It has been a good friend to me."

While watching the door for Teresa, he fell blissfully asleep. She tiptoed in an hour later. She had felt no great impatience. It was enough to know that he was safe and near to her. Leaning over him, she let her fingers lightly brush his ruddy cheek. Brave and simple and honest he looked as when she had first known him. She wondered what he, too, had dared and suffered while they had been parted. In a word or two he had told Captain Truscoe of the loss of the *Valkyrie*. All hands saved in the boats. This would be like her Ricardo, preferring not himself.

She summoned her courage to meet the ordeal of her confession. The warm tint faded from her olive cheek. She was like the Teresa, grave and resigned, who had fingered a

rosary in her room of the *Tarragona* before she had gone to the wharf to confront Colonel Fajardo, when she had been willing to pay the price as a woman who had loved and lost.

Ricardo opened his eyes and smiled. He was not too weak to open wide his arms and draw her close, so that her head was pillowed upon his mighty shoulder. She sighed and whispered:

"You *do* love me, Ricardo, everything and always? As I love you?"

"More than when I loved you and lost you in Cartagena, Teresa mine," he told her.

"And are you too tired to talk to me?" she anxiously entreated him.

"I had a rough night, but I feel strong enough to start a riot if you dare to leave me," he replied with the laugh that she so delighted to hear.

"Please don't look at my hair," she implored. "It is all gone. Now I look like an ugly black-headed boy. But I cut it off for you. Will that make you forgive me?"

"All I can see is that you are beautiful, Teresa dear. I thought you might have been ill with fever."

"Yes, Ricardo, if love is a fever. And I am not cured of that. I was trying to find you. And in Panama I was a young man in a bar-room hunting for news of you and your ship."

"The Lord save us!" he exclaimed in dismay. "Is that my reputation? And I got into all this trouble trying to find *you* in Cartagena! You went to Cocos Island, I hear, so you know Señor Bazán is dead. But how did you know where to look for me? What did you think? Did you get the letter I wrote in your uncle's house?"

"Not a word, Ricardo. All I had to tell me anything was the briar pipe you left there. Then I knew you were alive,

and so I followed you. It was because I could not understand — because I had to find you —"

Her solemn demeanor perplexed him. She drew away and took a chair, her hands clasped, one little shoe tapping the rug. For his own part he had so much to explain that he burst out:

"No wonder you couldn't understand. It is a long story, and I can give you only the first chapter of it now. That night when I failed to come back to the ship? You warned me to be careful, and so did old McClement, the chief engineer, but I had a grand opinion of myself. Colonel Fajardo decided to blow out my light. I annoyed him. His bravos bungled the job. They left me dead in the street, or so they thought."

"Did Colonel Fajardo think so? Tell me, did he think he had killed you, Ricardo?" asked Teresa in a tense voice.

"He must have felt upset about it that night, because I wasn't quite as dead as a mackerel. But I was supposed to die in jail where they threw me. So he must have been cheerful enough next morning. Did he show up at the ship before she sailed?"

Teresa's body relaxed. A tremulous sigh fluttered from her lips before she said:

"Yes, Ricardo, he came down to the ship. I asked him and he lied to me. I knew he lied."

Her eyes were so wistful, so profoundly tragic, that Ricardo, greatly mystified, clasped both her cold hands in one of his and forbore to break her silence. She was struggling with the temptation to withhold the secret from her lover, now that her justification had been vouchsafed. Why tarnish her fair name in his sight and perhaps repel him? Men were very jealous of the goodness of the women whom they truly loved. She fought down the temptation.

Better to live without Ricardo than to live with a shadow between them. She was about to speak when Ricardo said, with visible embarrassment:

"It will never trouble me, but you ought to know. I can't go back to Cartagena. I suppose you might call me a fugitive from justice. The world is big enough to get away from it, but I was not very gentle with Colonel Fajardo's bravos. Two or three of them are not singing and playing the guitar any more. And there was a fight on Cocos Island, but that incident is closed. I can forget it all if you can, Teresa darling, but I have to confess to you."

"You are a strong man who was fighting for his life, Ricardo," firmly returned Teresa Fernandez. "And I am only a woman who saw her lover dead and knew there was no other way to punish the wicked one who had killed him. If you say I should go back to Cartagena and suffer the punishment of the law, I will go. You have only to say one little word. There is no more Colonel Fajardo. Do you understand?"

Richard Cary gazed at her in great pity and love and admiration. Who was he to judge? Had he not taken justice into his own hands when he had boarded Don Miguel O'Donnell's schooner and courted fatal conflict? Had he slept any more uneasily for it? He had waged private war from the galleried streets of Cartagena to the palm-fringed bay of Cocos Island, like a roving Cary of Devon. Was there one law of justification for a man and another for a woman?

"If you believe in your heart that you did wrong and ought to pay for it, Teresa," he slowly responded, "then we will go back to Cartagena together. You and I walk hand in hand from now on. But for the life of me, I can't see it that way. Is it going to make you remorseful and unhappy? Mind, I go with you if it ought to be done."

"Ricardo, I am not a bad woman," she earnestly answered, "but I swear to you I feel no sorrow or shame. When it happened, I was willing and ready to pay the price, but it was not asked of me. And it was doing penance when I went back to Cartagena, just because I had to find out about you. What you have told me, that death did strike at you in the dark, is enough to make me at peace with myself and with God who must judge me. You know how you felt and what you said when you sailed across the Caribbean in the *Tarragona*, and saw my old city of Cartagena. It was just like you had lived and loved and fought there long ago. Perhaps it was that same Richard Cary that went to Cocos Island. And who knows but what I was another Teresa Fernandez, of the very long ago, that took it into her hands to punish the man who had killed her lover? If it had not been for her, there would have been no punishment for him at all. Does it make a difference, Ricardo, in what you think of me?"

"Only to make me love you more," said Ricardo. "We are not going back to Cartagena. Life begins now. We have had enough of the past."

"Then I can be happy," smiled Teresa, but she also sighed. "If I have been wicked and must suffer for it, there is something that will tell me, and it is not my own conscience. Some day and somewhere, we will have a home, with a garden, Ricardo, and the galleon bell will hang there as it did in my uncle's *patio*. It is a joyful bell now, for it has learned to ring good news. But if the day ever comes when Teresa hears it toll four bells for her, then she will know it is time for her to go. And she will go very gladly, for it will be enough, my precious, my splendid Ricardo, to have lived and loved with you."

CHAPTER XXIV

A TRANQUIL HAVEN

Richard Cary's younger brother William was waiting at the railroad station with a noisy little automobile in need of paint. The New Hampshire hills were no longer blanketed with snow as when he had driven the tall sailor to the train in the pung and had bidden him good-bye for the voyage to the Caribbean. In drowsy summer heat, the village street a shimmering canopy of green, William seriously reflected:

"It was right here, by gosh, that Dick busted the big guy's arm and slapped him into a snowdrift for playing a dirty trick on a stray collie dog. Huh, I guess I'd better watch my step while he's home this time. But mother'll put him in his place. He dassn't get gay with *her*. And she's got something to say to Dick. He never wrote her for weeks and weeks — and now he's fetchin' home a wife, a Dago girl he found somewheres down there. And he never consulted mother at all. I s'pose he figures he can get away with it. I don't think!"

The wandering Richard may have been in a state of trepidation when he swung Teresa from the parlor car, but he masked it with that lazy, amiable demeanor that had so annoyed William. The youngster displayed both admiration and embarrassment as he caught sight of Richard's foreign bride. "Snappy and mighty easy to look at," was William's silent verdict of approval, "and she sure would knock 'em cold in little old Fairfield. Dick might act dumb sometimes, but he knew how to pick a peach."

And now Teresa won the boy's undying allegiance by

kissing him on the cheek and exclaiming in English, instead of the Dago gibberish he had dreaded to hear:

"My gracious, Bill, but I am so very glad to see you! Ricardo has told me much about you, but it will give you the swelled head if I repeat it."

William blushed to the very last freckle and impetuously replied:

"He don't have to tell me a thing about you, Mrs. — Mrs. Dick Cary. You win."

Teresa laughed and glanced, with a vivacious interest, down the quiet street, at the square Colonial houses, the three or four stores, the brick post-office, and the Grange hall, all shaded beneath the arching elms. She turned to Richard to say:

"It is almost as sleepy as my old Cartagena, but different. It is your home, where your ancestors have lived, and I shall love it."

"For a while, perhaps," smiled Richard Cary. "It will be soothing. I am homesick for it myself, like finding a safe harbor to rest in."

He went to look after the luggage while Teresa chose to sit in the front seat of the battered little car with William. She had questions to ask, by way of forewarning herself, and the younger brother answered them artlessly.

"Well, it's this way, Mrs. — Mrs. — do you really want me to call you Teresa, honest? — all mother knows is what Dick wrote her from Panama after he got shipwrecked or something. He didn't spill much news — he never does — about all he said was that he had made a voyage in the Pacific and came near going to the bottom — and he was coming home to see the folks for a spell before he beat it off somewheres else. Then he mentioned that he had got married in Panama to a Miss Fernandez. And there's that."

"And was his mother angry with him, Bill?" demurely inquired Teresa with the air of a timid saint.

"Oh, not mad, but upset. Dick has always kept her guessing, and this was one thing too much. Why, he told her last time he was home that he was off the girls for keeps. She don't think Dick is fit to look after himself. Mothers get some funny ideas, don't they? But say, Mrs. — Miss — Teresa, you don't have to worry. I'm hard to please myself, and mighty particular when it comes to women. And you've put it across with me already, let me tell you."

This time it was Teresa who colored with pleasure. The omens seemed more auspicious. When Richard rejoined them, he insisted upon riding in the back seat with the luggage. William protested. He was expecting to make a parade of it, with Dick and his pippin of a bride conspicuously together in the tonneau. Fairfield would certainly sit up and take notice. He, William, would give 'em an eye-full.

He accepted defeat with good grace because the consolation prize was seated beside him. As he spurred the flivver down Main Street, he flung over his shoulder to Richard:

"Did you have any adventures this trip? When I asked you last time you joshed me something fierce, and I got sore. I hope you're going to act decent and loosen up to a fellow."

"Well, Bill, it was exciting in spots down yonder in the Caribbean," answered the deep, leisurely accents of brother Dick. "Why, I went ashore one night at Cartagena to buy some picture postcards to send you, and first thing you know, I —"

Teresa gasped. It was no tale to tell in Fairfield.

"And then what?" eagerly demanded William.

"I had the most awful dose of prickly heat you ever saw in your life. Hold on, Bill, stop the car. Here *is* something really exciting — a new porch on the minister's house, and Charlie Schumacher has painted his barber shop, and Frank Morrison is building an addition to the livery stable. And you dare to tell me, Teresa, that my town is as dead as Cartagena. Here comes Colonel Judah Mason to get his mail! Spry as ever and ninety-five years old last Christmas Day."

"You make me awful tired," sulkily muttered William. "Just because you're bigger than a house, you think you can treat me like a kid without any good sense."

Teresa mollified him with flattering words and a deference that indicated he had found a kindred soul who could appreciate him. She became silent, however, when the car jolted into the lane between the stone walls and approached the low-roofed farmhouse snuggled close to the ground upon a windy hill. Her heart sank. She faced an ordeal more disquieting than when she had ventured into The Broadway Front in the guise of young Rubio Sanchez on pleasure bent. She fancied the mother of Richard Cary to be a woman of formidable stature, harsh and imperious, who ruled her household with a rod of iron.

Richard caught a glimpse of his mother's face at a window, sitting there in her best black gown where she had aforetime kept watch for him, or had fluttered a handkerchief in farewell. Now she came quickly to the granite doorstep, a wisp of a woman whose thin features were set in lines of apprehension. Her mouth was austere, her eyes questioning. They dwelt upon the huge figure of Richard Cary with an expression commingled of affection and rebuke. Before she could greet him, he had leaped from the car and picked her up in his arms like a feather-weight of a

burden. It was a rite of his home-coming and, as always, she objected:

"Bless me, Richard, that's a trick you learned from your father that's dead and gone. I used to tell him it was dreadful undignified."

He let her down at the threshold and turned to present his wife. Teresa stood wistful and uncertain, yet with a certain amusement that she should have felt terrified of meeting this gray-haired little woman who looked as if a breath might blow her away. Richard cried, in a mood of boyish elation:

"Didn't I tell you I simply had to make the southern run, mother? Something was pulling me. Now I know why. Teresa was at the other end of the tow-rope."

"I am pleased to meet your wife, Richard," primly replied Mrs. Cary. "We'll do our best to make her comfortable and happy here, I am sure. Your room is ready, and dinner will be on the table in half an hour."

"All I ask is to make your son happy," said Teresa, her emotions near the surface. Her smile was disarming, and the inflections of her voice stirred the mother's heart. Presently Teresa went upstairs, but Richard lingered below. Anxiously his mother exclaimed:

"You don't know how thankful I am to have a few minutes alone with you. Seems as if I couldn't wait. I don't mean to fret, but who is she and who are her folks, and how did it happen? She don't act as foreign as I expected and she's as pretty as a picture and has sweet, ladylike ways, but —"

"Better get acquainted before you borrow trouble," drawled the beaming Richard. "To begin with, she is an orphan, which ought to appeal to your sympathy. The last near relative she had, an uncle, died not long ago. He

was the old gentleman I sailed for in the *Valkyrie* that was lost in collision. When it comes to family, she can match ancestors with the Carys and Chichesters and have some left over."

"And where did you meet her, Richard?"

"On shipboard going south. It was a case of love at first sight."

"Hum-m! I never set any great store by hasty marriages, but there's exceptions to every rule and let us hope and pray this will be one of them. Isn't Teresa a Romanist? Does she have to confess to a priest every so often? Did you tell her we didn't have such a thing in Fairfield?"

"No; she confesses her sins to me and I grant her absolution," truthfully answered Richard. "Anything more?"

"Don't be frivolous," she admonished him. "I have a right to know. She dresses real elegant, I must say — in good taste, but expensive. I'm saying nothing against your wife, but if she's extravagant and slack how can you support her and keep her contented? Has she means of her own?"

"I didn't marry her for money," carelessly returned the son. "As far as I know, she didn't have a penny when I met her. Now please take time to get your bearings and you'll bless the day I first laid eyes on Teresa Fernandez."

Mrs. Cary sighed, brightened a little, and tripped to the kitchen to look in the oven. In the low-raftered dining-room the table was already set with the pink luster ware, the Canton cups, the thin silver spoons, the hand-woven linen cloth treasured in Grandmother Cary's cedar chest. When Teresa came downstairs she wore a white waist and skirt much like the uniform, plain, immaculate, in which Richard had first beheld her. She appeared so briskly efficient, so different from Mrs. Cary's conceptions of the

indolent ladies of Spanish America, that it was like a rift in the cloud.

At the dinner table it was Teresa, alert and light of foot, who left her chair when anything was needed from the sideboard or kitchen. To Mrs. Cary's objections she replied, like a gay mutineer, that she was one of the family and expected to earn her passage. So gracefully did she wait on them that the infatuated young William could not eat for watching her. Richard Cary's mother, a martinet of a New England housekeeper of the old school, felt her doubts and scruples fading.

They were nearer vanishing entirely when, after dinner, Teresa donned an apron and insisted upon washing the dishes and tidying up the kitchen. Sweetly but firmly she refused to listen to the mother's protestations and sent her to the porch to sit and talk with Richard. William hovered in the doorway until he was permitted to ply a dish-towel, subject to a rigid supervision of his handiwork. Teresa sang lilting snatches of Spanish ballads as she toiled. These New England women, she reflected, so proud of their housekeeping? Pouf! Had they ever lived in a steamer of a first-class passenger service?

When, at length, Ricardo's mother was permitted to enter the kitchen from which she had been so amazingly evicted, her demeanor was critical in the extreme, as if expecting to have to do the work all over again. The competent Teresa, still singing, was wiping the last specks of dust from remote shelves and corners. William was polishing the copper hot-water boiler for dear life.

"Captain's inspection?" cried the blithe Teresa. "We are not quite ready, Bill and I, but to-morrow — *Valgame Dios*, I will help you make your house shine from the main deck to the top."

Mrs. Cary inspected, marveled, and was conquered. It was beyond belief that her careless, absent-minded Richard should have shown the surpassing judgment to select a jewel of a wife like this! Inherited reserve breaking its bonds, the mother exclaimed:

"Teresa, my dear, you are smarter than chain lightning. First thing you know, I'll be bragging about you to every woman in Fairfield. I intend to propose you for membership in the home economics department of our Woman's Club."

"And I will dance the fandango with William to amuse them," said Teresa, with a naughty twinkle in her eye.

In the afternoon she walked with Ricardo across the rolling fields of the Cary farm. With a pair of black horses William was mowing a thick stand of red clover. The strident clatter of the cutter bar was like a familiar song to the elder son, to carry him back to his boyhood. His mind was at peace, relaxed and untroubled by turbulent memories.

The tranquil landscape had laid its spell also upon the heart of Teresa. Her eyes filled and her voice had a pensive cadence as she said:

"Is this a dream, Ricardo mine? Or was all that a dream, down by the Caribbean Sea, and is this true? I feel just like you, that perhaps I have had two lives to live. Ah, how I beseech the dear God and the Holy Mary to let this life last, maybe not here, but anywhere with you. This is what I told you when I found you drifting with the galleon bell."

"Forget the galleon bell," he told her, "I am sure it will never ring again. And we will say no more about the Spanish Main. Let my mother guess and wonder what happened."

"Yes, Ricardo, it could not be told in Fairfield," sighed Teresa, "not the least little bit. Already I can see that. We will be a mystery, you and I —"

Like a processional vestured in beautiful garments of green, the days of the brief New England summer went gliding by. Brawny and untiring, Richard helped William with the haying and did the work of three hired men. Teresa took more and more of the household routine upon herself, and the mother was affectionately compelled to enjoy the first vacation in years. In their leisure hours the married lovers wandered through the countryside in the disreputable little car, or went fishing on the pond.

To his mother Richard made no mention of future plans. She was accustomed to his indifferent moods when at home from sea, but now he was a man with new responsibilities. These ought to arouse his ambition and make him bestir himself. Therefore she ventured to inquire:

"Are you calculating to spend the winter with me, Richard? Not but what you and Teresa are as welcome as the flowers in May, but she is used to more comforts and luxuries than we can give her on this old farm, and how do you intend to take care of her? What money I've saved in the bank belongs to you, and I don't begrudge your spending every penny of it, but, well, it kind of worries me. You told me she had no means of her own —"

"That reminds me, mother," her son replied, blandly unconcerned. "I found a letter from Cartagena in the mail-box. Teresa has gone to the village with Bill, so she hasn't seen it yet. It is from a Señor Alonzo de Mello, a banker who looked after the business interests of Teresa's uncle. I sent him a report from Panama of the loss of the *Valkyrie* and the death of Señor Ramon Bazán. He en-

closes a letter to Teresa in Spanish. Here is what he writes me:

DEAR CAPTAIN CARY:

I send you my joyful congratulations on your marriage to Teresa Fernandez whom I have always loved like my own daughter. Your report was received, informing me that both the ship and poor Ramon Bazán were no more. It will interest you to know that on the day before he sailed from Cartagena he made a will, properly executed, leaving everything he possessed to his niece. There had been other wills like this, but he had torn them up in fits of temper.

Your report was confirmed in all respects by the officers and crew of the *Valkyrie* who, as you know, were landed at Corinto by the Italian steamer *Giuseppe Balderno* which sank your vessel in collision. They made their way back to Panama, arriving there soon after you sailed for New York. My agent interviewed them in behalf of the estate of the deceased owner. They proposed chartering a sailing vessel in all haste and returning to Cocos Island. This information was confidentially imparted.

The insurance underwriters have accepted the evidence of total loss, with no negligence on the part of the masters and crew of the *Valkyrie*. I am therefore remitting, as per draft enclosed to the order of Señora Teresa Cary, the sum of thirty thousand dollars in settlement of the marine policies issued against the vessel. I am also writing Teresa regarding the house and contents and such other property as belonged to her departed uncle. Peace to his soul! My cordial salutations to a gallant shipmaster who deserves better fortune on his next voyage. Placing myself at your disposal, I am

Faithfully yours

ALONZO DE MELLO

Richard Cary's mother was tremulous with excitement as she gasped: "Why, Teresa is an heiress — *thirty thousand dollars* right in her hands, and other property besides. And she never so much as hinted that she might be a rich woman!"

"Teresa didn't know," explained Richard. "There was no putting your finger on poor Ramon Bazán. He was very

flighty. Here comes Teresa now. This ought to please her."

"If she doesn't get all stirred up, I shall feel like shaking you both."

The heiress gracefully descended from the antique flivver, assisted by the adoring William.

To her Richard calmly announced:

"Here is a draft for thirty thousand — insurance on the *Valkyrie*. Uncle Ramon forgave you for all your insults."

"And he did leave his money to me?" cried Teresa in accents of self-reproach. "And I was so awful horrid to him! It is from Señor de Mello? What does he say?"

Richard gave her the enclosure in Spanish. She read it swiftly to the end and looked up to observe:

"He even left me the little brown monkey, Ricardo. That is too much. I will send word to give that monkey to somebody that will be good to it, with a pension, eh? The house he can sell or rent, Señor de Mello says, if we do not wish to live in Cartagena. Poor Uncle Ramon! I am sad and ashamed of myself because I was not always nice to him. I guess I must cry a little."

Presently the heiress brightened and went on to announce, with headlong ardor:

"First I will buy William a big, new, shiny automobile and give him plenty of money to go through college with. Then I will put an electric light plant in this old farmhouse, and a tiled kitchen and plenty of bathrooms and — let me see — I think I will give your heretic church in Fairfield a new organ. How much money have I got left, Ricardo?"

"Quite a package, sweetheart. Don't stop yet. I am enjoying it."

Mrs. Cary raised her hands in horror, shaken to the depths of her thrifty soul.

"For the land's sake, child, keep the money for yourself. What sense is there in spending it on us? I declare you make my head spin like a top."

"Then I will talk it over with Ricardo," said Teresa. "He can help me find some more ways to spend it."

These profligate intentions could not be thwarted, nor did Richard Cary attempt to do so. He realized that gratitude and affection impelled her; also that it was more than this. When alone in the world and earning a living at sea, she had been anxious to gain money and save it. Now she had a shield and a protector in her yellow-haired giant of a husband who could master all things. And there was a sense that in doing good to others she was doing penance for a certain tragic episode which the fates had darkly, inscrutably thrust upon her.

Not many weeks after this sensational shower of riches, another letter came to Captain Richard Cary. It had been mailed from a Costa Rican port. The writer was the unterrified Charlie Burnham, late chief engineer of the *Valkyrie*.

DEAR SKIPPER:

Here we are again, on Cocos Island, and all hands sorry you aren't bossing the outfit. Mr. Bradley Duff is still going strong and sober, and is a good old scout. He didn't fall off the wagon even when we blew into Jerry Tobin's dump in Panama. You sure did put the fear of God into him. Mr. Panchito, the second mate, bought a hundred dollars' worth of fancy shirts and neckties. He is one natural-born strutter. All hands are well and still with us. You ought to have heard us yell when we learned you had not been drowned in the silly old *Valkyrie*. We had to give you up that night she went down. Bradley Duff punched the Italian hophead of a skipper in the jaw because he wouldn't stick around the wreckage and hunt for you any longer.

Now about the treasure! Better come back and watch us root it out. I extended Don Miguel O'Donnell's hydraulic pipe-line and it works pretty. We have been washing for two weeks and the nozzle kicks the gravel out in great style. The dynamite that Don Miguel touched off under us mussed things up something frightful. What makes the worst trouble is the tremendous chunk of cliff that was jarred loose and spilled all over the place. The rock is soft, but hard to break up and handle.

Anyhow, we have uncovered some more silver, but no gold ingots so far. What we are getting out now isn't so scattering, but in solid lots of bullion — sometimes as much as we can load into one of Don Miguel's two-wheel carts. You don't see us quitting, do you? Atta boy! The agreement stands, and all hands have signed a paper to that effect. Half of what we get goes to you. Jerry Tobin told us in Panama that you had married Papa Ramon's niece, and how the wedding was pulled off in his bungalow.

Now if Señor Bazán left his property to this Miss Fernandez, as perhaps he did, you and she will have to split your fifty per cent of the treasure. That is how Bradley Duff and I dope it out. Your wife has a look-in because it was her uncle's chart that steered us to where the treasure was buried. And you draw down your slice because if you hadn't chased Don Miguel O'Donnell off the island, where would we be at now?

This letter is sent in a Costa Rican fishing schooner that touched here for fresh water, being blown offshore. We filled the crew full of rum and kept them close to the beach so they didn't get wise to our finding any treasure. They thought we were just another bunch of loonies that had come to rummage Cocos Island.

I will send you another report as soon as I get a chance. Please tell your wife that we have built a nice stone wall around her uncle's grave. *Adios*, and here's looking at you!

Sincerely yours

CHARLES R. BURNHAM
Chief Engineer

There came a September day when summer lingered in the warm haze and the soft westerly winds. A wanton touch of frost had painted the foliage, here and there, in tints of yellow or crimson. Teresa and Ricardo motored farther than usual nor turned until they reached the sea-

coast, many miles from Fairfield. A small surf crooned among the weedy rocks or ran hissing up the golden sands. On the distant horizon was a sooty banner of smoke from a steamer's funnel. A coasting schooner lifted a bit of topsail as small and white as the wing of a gull.

Hand-in-hand, the lovers climbed the nearest headland. While they stood there, the wind veered. Instead of breathing off the land, with the scents of field and woodland, it blew strongly from the eastward. It came sweeping over the salt sea, with a tang and a boisterous vigor unlike the soft airs of the summer that tarried reluctant to depart.

Cool, pungent, it seemed to Richard Cary such a wind as had whipped the Caribbean to foam and pelted the decks with spray when he had joyously faced it upon the bridge of the swinging *Tarragona*, the wind that long ago had blown the clumsy ships of Devon across to the Spanish Main.

He sighed and brushed a hand across his eyes. Teresa stood with parted lips and face aglow. A long silence and she said:

"I feel it, too, Ricardo. Shall we go south again? Not to Cartagena, but — "

His arm swept toward the south in a gesture large and eloquent as he exclaimed:

"Nor to Cocos Island, Teresa dear. But you and I belong in those seas, somewhere. We have always belonged there. We have been at anchor long enough."

"The wind and the sea," she murmured. "Yes, they are calling us. We had better go."

THE END

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